



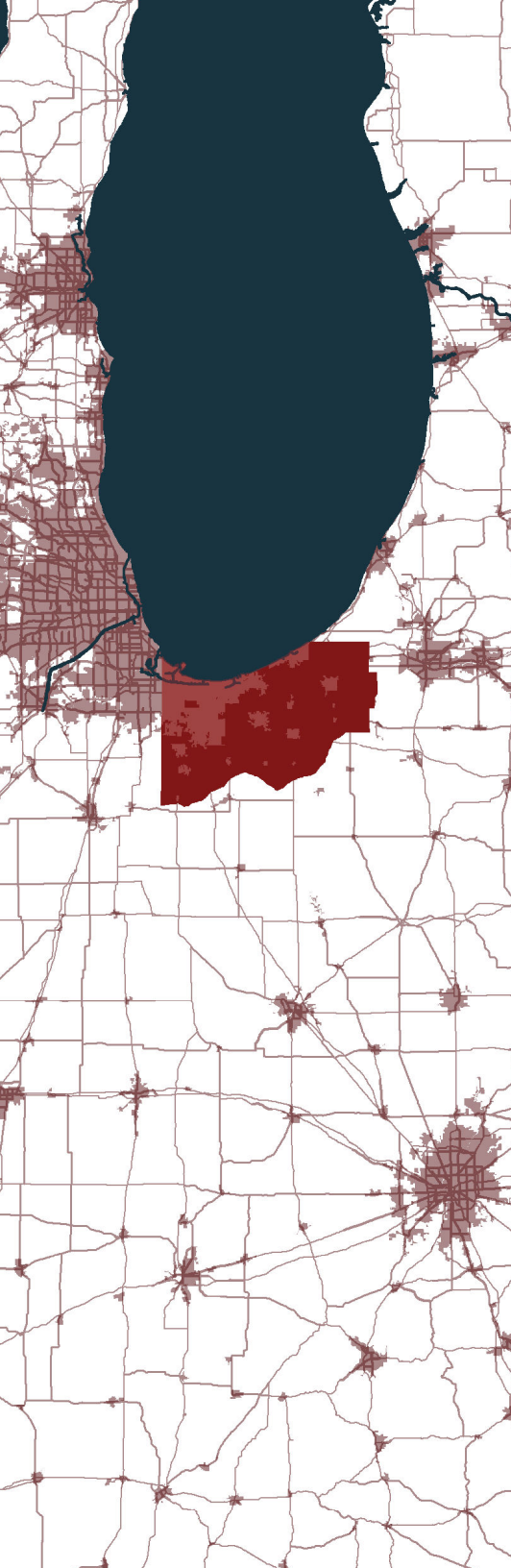
2040

Comprehensive Regional Plan

A Vision for Northwest Indiana

PLAN SUMMARY

June 2011



ABOUT NIRPC AND THE 2040 COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PLAN

Serving Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is a council of local governments that provides a forum for Northwest Indiana elected officials to address regional issues relating to transportation, environment and community and economic development. The agency was established in 1965 as the Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission pursuant to enabling legislation enacted by the state. A 1973 amendment provided the commission with its current name and allowed for the addition of new member counties, resulting in LaPorte County joining NIRPC in 1979. An amendment in 1996 provided a seat on the commission for every mayor and a subsequent amendment in 2003 opened seats to all 41 cities and towns in the three-county region, with a requirement that representatives be elected officials.

NIRPC operates as a cooperative with 53 members. In addition to the municipal appointments, the county councils, boards of commissioners, county surveyors and the governor appoint one member. The agency's planning area is composed of Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, encompasses 1,520 square miles, includes 41 cities and towns and 44 townships and currently is home to more than 770,000 people.

NIRPC also functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Northwest Indiana. It works with federal and state transportation departments and local transit operators to prioritize and fund regional transportation projects, making the region well positioned to capitalize on some of the most strategic and critical links in our nation's transportation system.

NIRPC's adopted purpose is to create the conditions within which policy makers can create a sustainable, vibrant regional community and quality of life for Northwest Indiana.

The 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP) places NIRPC in a new role in the region with respect to planning and implementation. NIRPC is being called upon to assist local governments and regional stakeholders to develop integrated land use and transportation strategies, support economic development efforts, help realize land conservation and a protected green infrastructure, and to do so in a manner that recognizes and supports social equity and environmental justice.

2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan

A Vision for Northwest Indiana

PLAN SUMMARY

To view the full 2040 CRP go to www.nirpc.org

Requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at mthorne@nirpc.org. Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission • June 2011

COMPREHENSIVE
Regional
Plan
2040
For Northwest Indiana





Gary City Hall with U.S. Steel in background

THE TASK BEFORE US

Nestled in the northwest corner of Indiana, between the metropolitan influences of Chicago and Indianapolis, our region has longed for an opportunity to stand on its own. Shaped by sand and steel, Northwest Indiana draws on a rich history of economic accomplishment and unmatched natural beauty. Today, these advantages present us with a unique challenge in an unpredictable world – to shape our own future, and sustain our diverse quality of life.

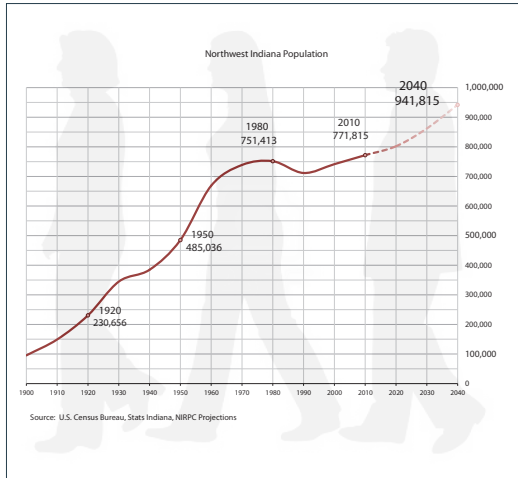
This challenge has been met with the release of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan, or CRP, which represents the first broad planning initiative covering Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. Unlike previous plans released by NIRPC, which focused primarily on transportation, the CRP marries into the mix land use, human and economic resources, and environmental policy objectives.

Together, these are extremely broad issues that require complex decision making on a large, regional scale. While some aspects of the CRP are based on local plans and near-term improvements, its long-term horizon pushes us to think well beyond these needs.

The CRP exists as a blueprint of our collective desires to remake Northwest Indiana as a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united region - and to help all see and enhance the beauty of where we live and work.

An Evolving Region

THE CRP STRESSES A NUMBER OF FACTORS THAT POINT TO BOTH OUR CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND OUR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES:



POPULATION AND JOB GROWTH

The Lake, Porter, and LaPorte region expects to grow by 170,000 people (a 13 percent increase) and 80,000 new jobs (a 29 percent increase) by the year 2040. The following have been identified as the prime sectors for job growth:

1. *Transportation, Distribution and Logistics*
2. *Advanced Manufacturing*
3. *IT and Technology*
4. *Professional and Medical Services*

LIVABLE CENTERS

Northwest Indiana will concentrate population and employment within existing communities following a "Livable Centers" principle. 83 percent of the region's population and 93 percent of employment will be situated in livable centers to take advantage of existing infrastructure, services, facilities and amenities.

REVITALIZATION

Northwest Indiana will focus on revitalization of the region's core communities, which include Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City, to make efficient use of resources and to capitalize on existing infrastructure and assets.



MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

To encourage livability and accessibility, Northwest Indiana will create a strong multi-modal transit network. This network will connect the region's major centers, provide access to jobs and improve our quality of life through strategies that increase travel choice and reduce vehicle congestion.



PARTNERSHIPS

Northwest Indiana will utilize the region's educational and institutional organizations for investments in job and capital programs supportive of the CRP Vision.



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Our residents and employers will embrace our responsibilities as stewards of our natural resources and will seize opportunities to build a green infrastructure network.

Championing Collaborative Solutions

THE VISION

The 2040 Plan is built on a “community-based regional consensus” - the outcome of numerous public involvement meetings with residents and decision makers. An overall direction, conceived at the *Forum on the Future of Northwest Indiana*, a 500-person visioning event held in December 2008, is summarized in the vision statement.

INVision Northwest Indiana - Stretching from the treasured shores of Lake Michigan to the historic banks of the Kankakee River and committed to an ethic of sustainability:

A vibrant region

A revitalized region

Our economy is thriving; our people are well-educated; our growth is planned; and natural and rural areas are valued and protected.

Urban areas are renewed,
and our environment is
clean.

An accessible region

A united region

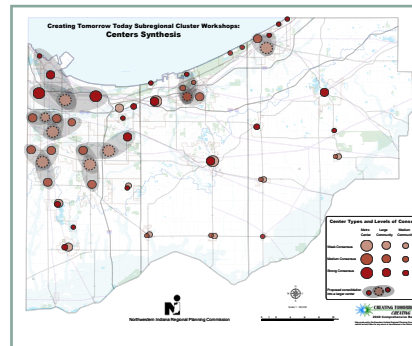
Our people are connected to each other and to equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.

Celebrating our diversity,
we work together as a
community across racial,
ethnic, political and
cultural lines for the good
of the region.

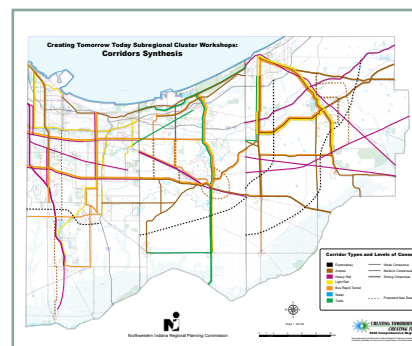
The CRP includes goals and objectives based on this vision, which give further clarity and guidance for the plan's implementation.

THE FRAMEWORK

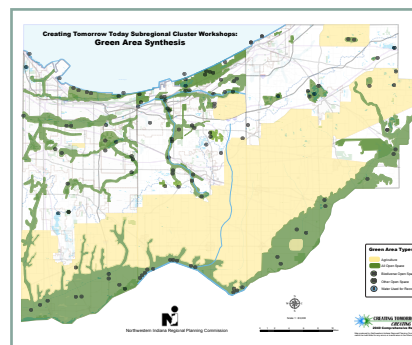
Community meetings held throughout the region identified preferences for centers, corridors and green areas - places to encourage development, key highway/transit connections and important natural and rural lands.



CENTERS



CORRIDORS



GREEN AREAS

THE PRINCIPLES

SUPPORT URBAN REINVESTMENT

Reinvestment in our historic urban centers is a key principle guiding the CRP. We understand that the metropolitan region is only as strong as its collective parts. Strengthening the urban core will lift the entire region and preserve the cultural and historic assets of Northwest Indiana. Stakeholders identified the need to revitalize our core communities to achieve regional prosperity by 2040.

ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The investment decisions made as a result of the CRP will affect different communities in varying ways. Benefits and adverse consequences must be fairly distributed across all communities, including areas with high concentrations of low-income and minority populations. Where possible, adverse consequences should be avoided or greatly reduced. Improving mobility and access to jobs for the low-income and minority populations was a key consideration in evaluating growth and investment options.

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND WATERSHEDS

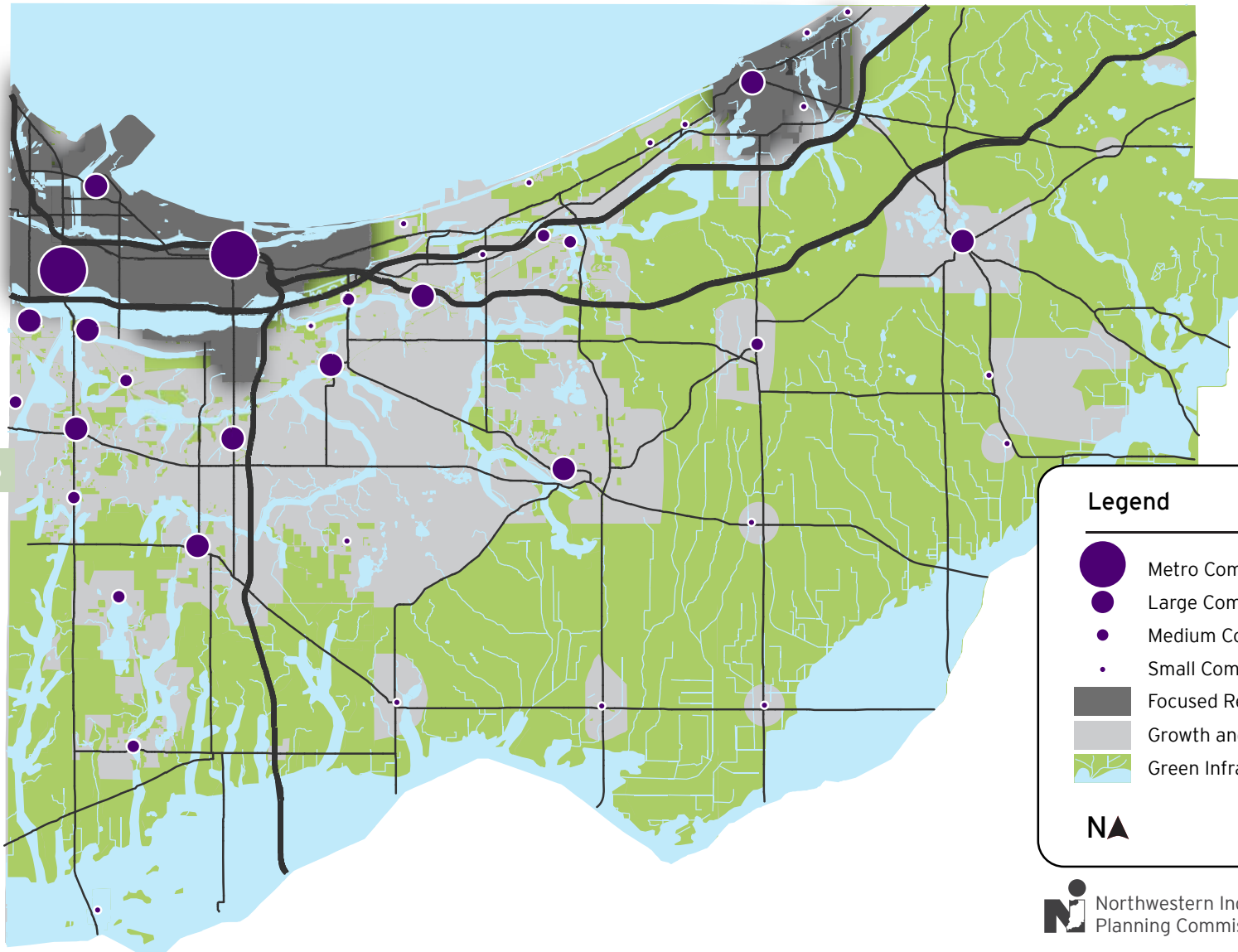
Northwest Indiana contains significant environmental assets and productive, prime farmland, which provide important economic and quality-of-life benefits. The CRP conserves the green infrastructure that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, protects air and water resources and contributes to the health and resiliency of the region.

INTEGRATE TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Transportation and land use growth are traditionally linked. The development of a multimodal system, including enhanced public mass transit and non-motorized transportation, helps to improve mobility, access to jobs and improved quality of life for all.



Northwest Indiana Growth and Revitalization Vision



 Northwestern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission

HNTB

The Growth and Revitalization Vision synthesizes the centers, corridors and green areas maps and gives physical expression to the Vision Statement, the plan principles and goals and objectives. It contains the components listed on the following page.

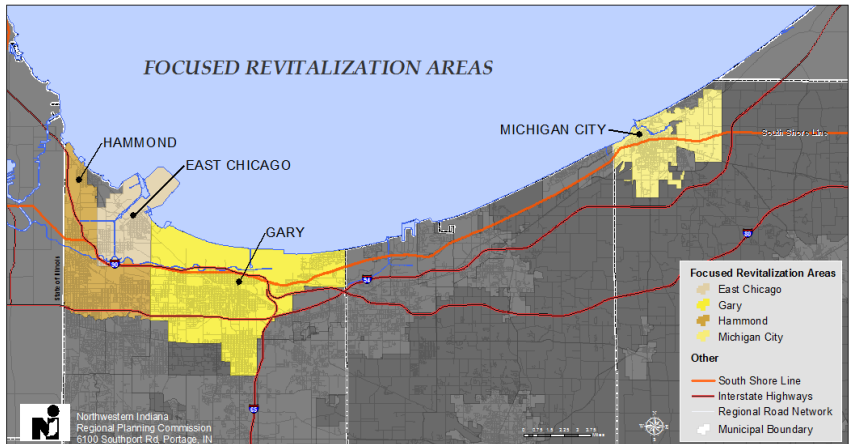
Green Infrastructure -

Northwest Indiana’s “green infrastructure” is composed of a complex array of natural and environmental features. The green infrastructure concept also includes the vast majority of the region’s agricultural resources. Maintaining a sustainable green infrastructure network is highly dependent upon successful implementation of both the urban and rural growth, and conservation strategies of the CRP.

Focused Revitalization -

There was broad consensus in the region that investment in and revitalization of the region’s core urbanized areas, generally located along the lakefront, are critical to the long-term stability of our regional social and economic outlook. Repeatedly, revitalization and redevelopment of the urban core communities were identified as a high-priority action step. This focus will demand an equitable distribution and utilization of the region’s resources.

GROWTH AND REVITALIZATION VISION ELEMENTS



CENTER TYPES

SYMBOL	CENTERS	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS/ DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATIONS	POPULATION INDICATION
	Small Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Small rural centers supporting basic living needs- low density residential land uses and some commercial or retail activitiesResidents depend on nearby medium or large communities to meet full service needs i.e. major purchases and health care Examples: Winfield, Long Beach, La Crosse, Kingsbury		up to 6,000
	Medium Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderate size urban/ suburban community with retail activities and residential land usesImportant destinations primarily for the people from surrounding communities or townsDoes not always function as a full “service community (ie lacks hospital, full retail services, employment, etc)Impacts traffic and land use patterns at local and sub-regional level Examples: Lowell, Dyer, St. John		7,000 - 19,000
	Large Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More of a free-standing community with hubs of retail activities and residential land usesIncludes nearly a full complement of services and facilitiesTypically sustains a higher percentage of employmentImpacts traffic and land use patterns at local and sub-regional level Examples: Merrillville, Portage, Valparaiso, Hobart		20,000 - 70,000
	Metropolitan Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More urban center for commercial activities, services, amenities and residential land usesIncludes major/ unique destinations for people around the regionAreas with high density of employment and populationSignificantly impacts the regional economy, traffic and land use patterns Examples: Gary, Hammond		70,000 +

Community Type and Role -

The CRP identifies regional preferences for the growth, scale and character of the region’s 41 communities. Understanding these preferences was an important step in understanding local expectations for change.

Growth and Infill -

The CRP recognizes that the continued or improved economic health of all the region’s communities requires continued growth and investment. Perhaps the greatest emphases of the CRP are policies aimed at accommodating new growth and infill development in Livable Centers. This approach is described in the Transportation and Growth and Conservation chapters. Success of the Livable Centers approach also relies on the CRP’s rural and unincorporated area policies and Green Infrastructure network.

Initiating Change

A meaningful plan for the future must be set in motion today. Northwest Indiana is challenged with many urgent issues, which include improving infrastructure where it is needed most, providing quality of life opportunities for all residents, and continuing to build momentum and confidence for future investment. The CRP has set a strong framework for action in which all residents are highly encouraged to participate. While NIRPC is a key steward of the plan and its implementation, there are many partners, agencies and organizations it must engage with to be successful.



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IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

The CRP includes an “Implementation Action Plan” that outlines key activities to be completed. It identifies the projects NIRPC should assume a strong leadership role on along with “regional partnership” agencies and organizations. For example, the Regional Development Authority (RDA) plays an extremely important role in the implementation of the Marquette Plan for Lakefront Revitalization, expansion of commuter rail service, enhancement of the regional trail network and development of a regional bus system. These represent historical areas of focus for NIRPC.

CRP IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Advancing a proactive agenda for change, NIRPC formed the CRP Implementation Committee to help identify, organize and prioritize specific recommendations from the plan. This new standing committee will aid regional stakeholders and other agencies of interest in various implementation activities as outlined in the CRP. With the help from this committee, NIRPC staff and Commission board members, a five-to-10 year constrained implementation program will be drafted. It will realistically assess and identify responsibilities NIRPC and its partners can provide toward measurable implementation of the plan.



New Roles / Renewed Commitments

A fresh approach to regional planning as outlined in the CRP will require NIRPC to continue the roles it has served historically - in addition to undertaking new challenges.

POLICY STEWARDSHIP

NIRPC will continue to monitor, develop and support actions that advance the interests of the CRP. Stewardship includes major issue/technical support, legislative initiatives and an expanding Council of Governments (COG) role.

FUNDING AND FINANCE

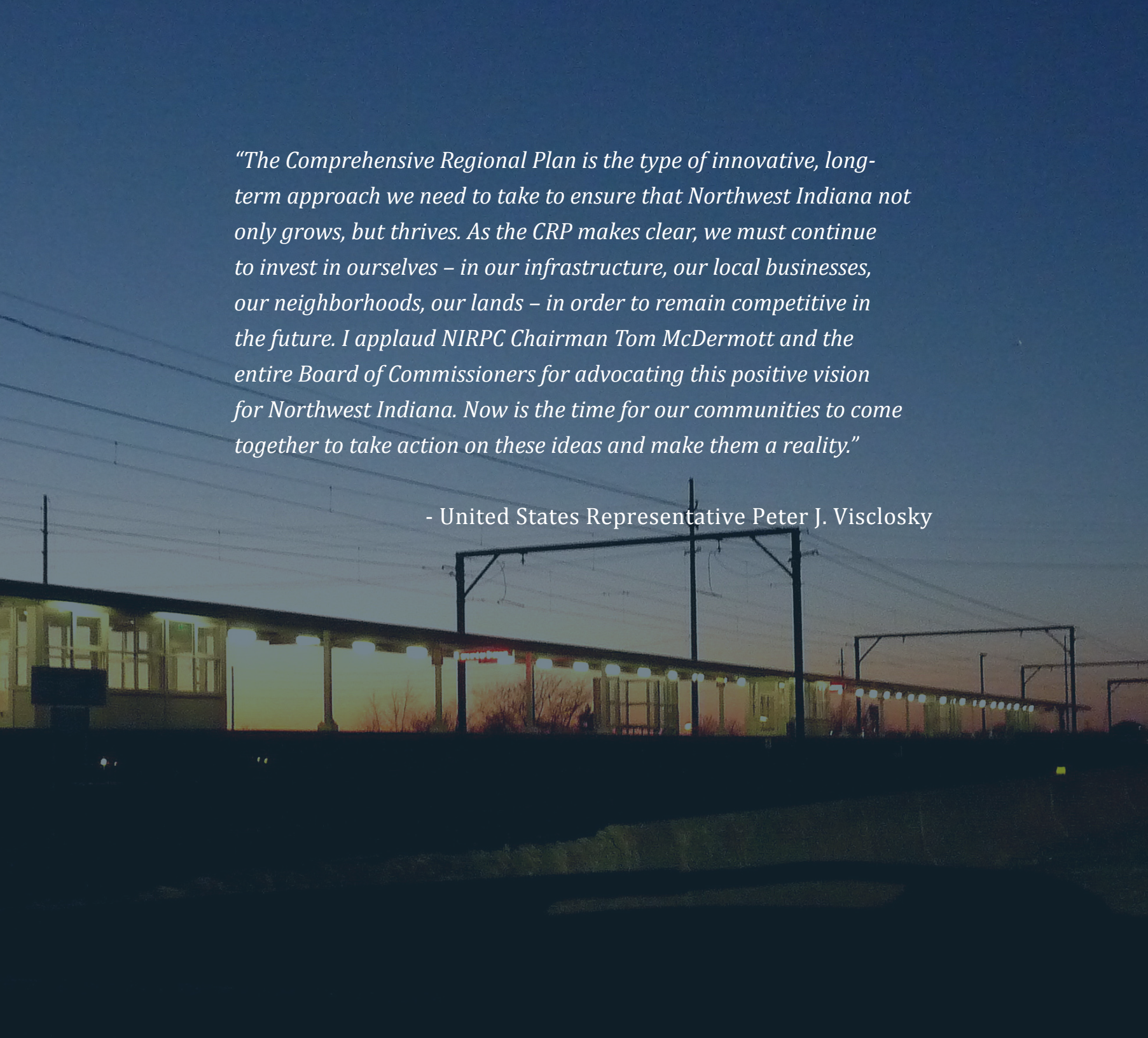
NIRPC has served the region well in the past through securing resources for transportation and community facilities. Working with its partners and stakeholders, NIRPC will focus on creating and identifying more resources for CRP implementation, particularly in the areas of economic development and environmental management.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

NIRPC will develop new outreach and education programs to inform its constituency of agency initiatives and regional issues. Community planning and development training also has been identified as a role NIRPC could help fulfill.

LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Many implementation actions identified in the CRP represent local assistance projects. Supporting and facilitating local community planning, identifying best practices and relating CRP policies to local development decisions will be an important element of the plan's realization.



"The Comprehensive Regional Plan is the type of innovative, long-term approach we need to take to ensure that Northwest Indiana not only grows, but thrives. As the CRP makes clear, we must continue to invest in ourselves – in our infrastructure, our local businesses, our neighborhoods, our lands – in order to remain competitive in the future. I applaud NIRPC Chairman Tom McDermott and the entire Board of Commissioners for advocating this positive vision for Northwest Indiana. Now is the time for our communities to come together to take action on these ideas and make them a reality."

- United States Representative Peter J. Visclosky



CHARTING THE COURSE

The 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan offers Northwest Indiana a well-defined road map toward accomplishing a unified and prosperous vision. This summary plan provides readers a snapshot of the variety of challenges that need to be addressed to accomplish this vision.

- Growth and Conservation Pattern p. 12
- Transportation p. 34
- Environment and Green Infrastructure p. 48
- Human and Economic Resources p. 60
- Stewardship and Governance p. 66
- Implementation p. 74



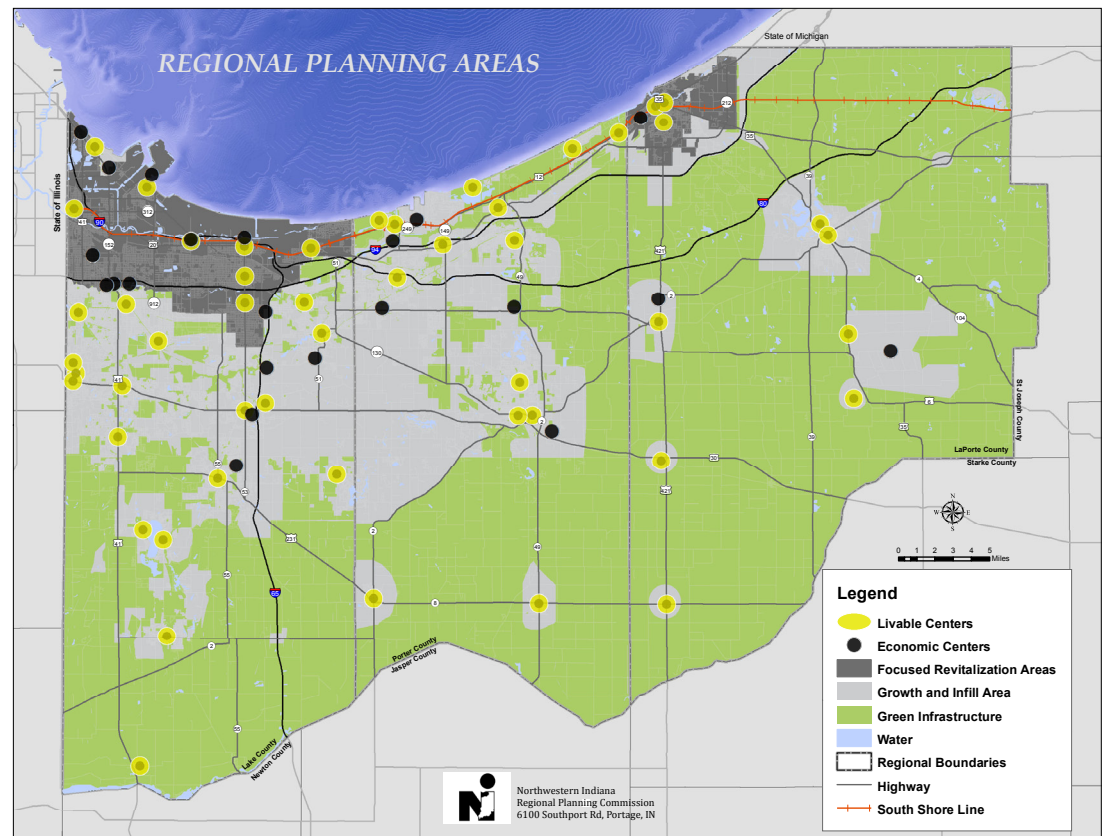


Downtown Chesterton

Chapter I: Growth & Conservation

OUR GOALS:

- Livable urban, suburban and rural centers
- Revitalized urban core cities
- Managed growth that protects farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and important ecosystems

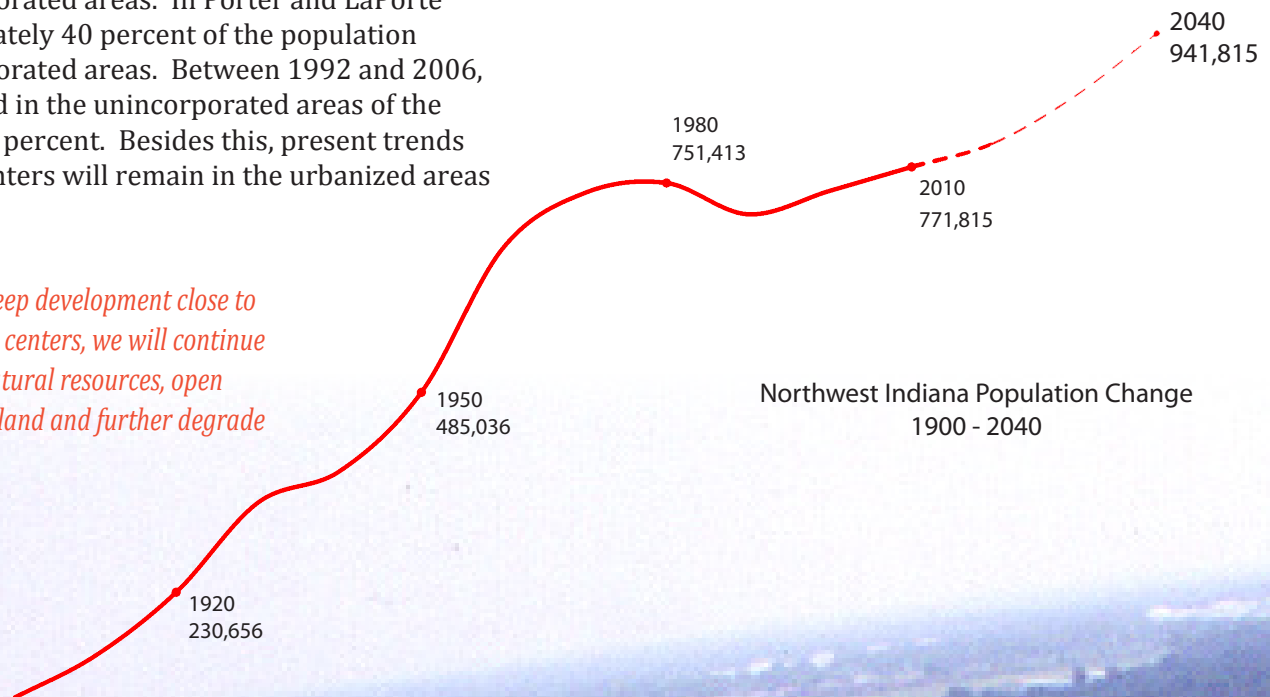
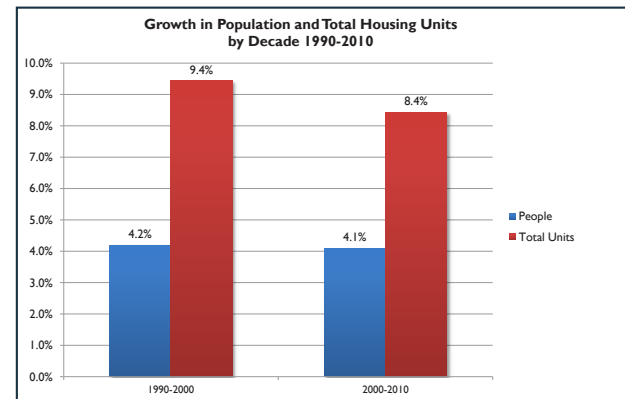


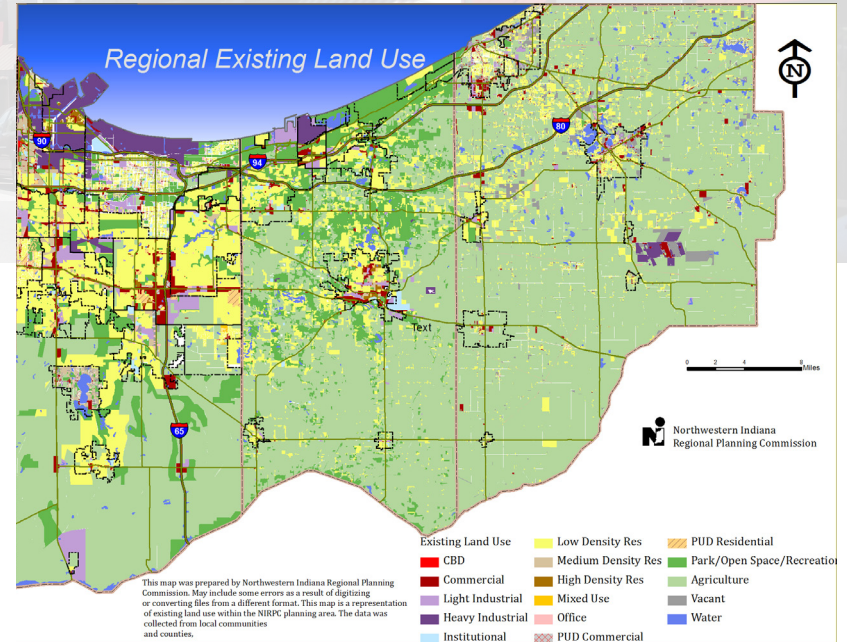
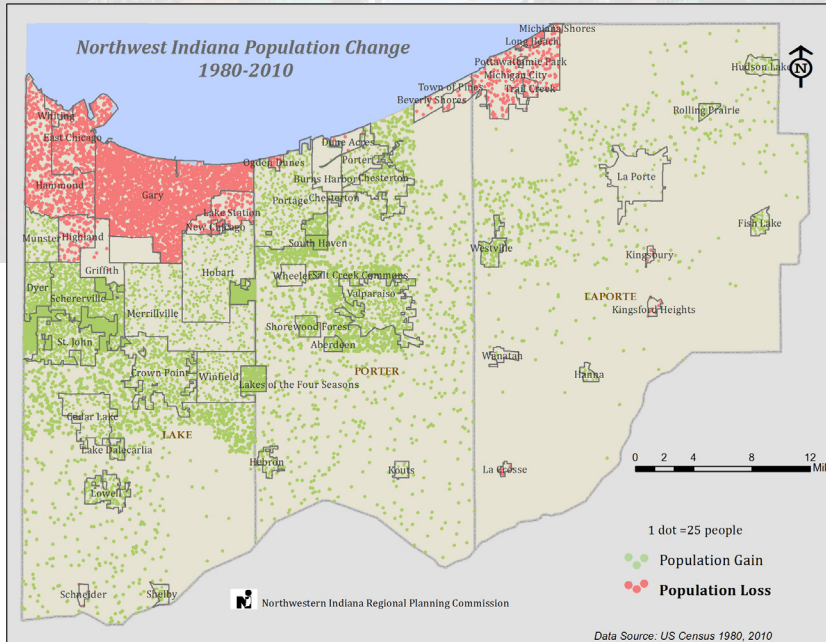
FACING REALITY / GROWTH AND CONSERVATION

While our vision for the future embraces renewal, the fact remains today that our core urban communities, such as Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City, continue to lose population and jobs. A historical trend of high vacancy rates in our core downtown districts continues to hinder revitalization. An urgent need remains to counter this trend and spark investor confidence where it once flourished.

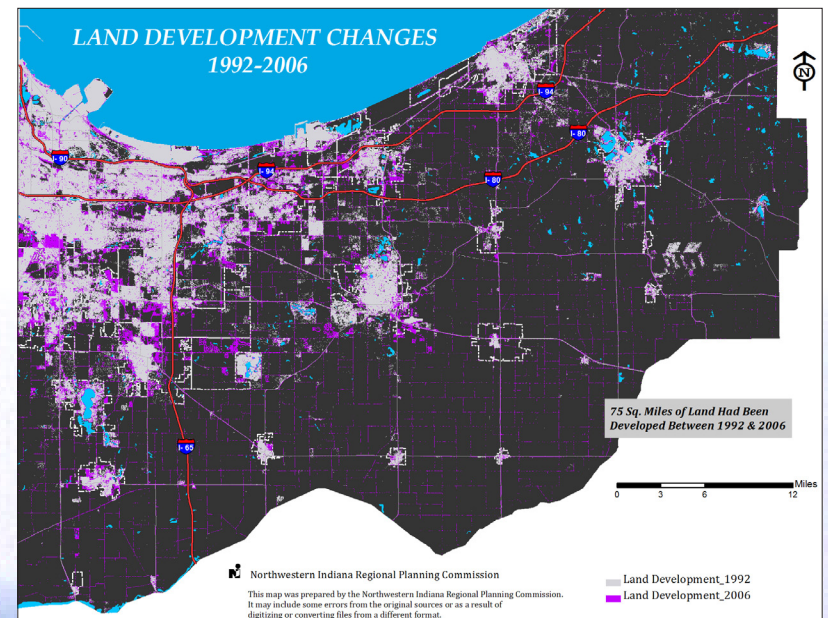
Historical growth patterns indicate that, without action, the unincorporated areas of the region will continue to lose their rural character and further the spread of unsustainable sprawl. More than 20 percent of the region's population resides in unincorporated areas. In Porter and LaPorte counties, approximately 40 percent of the population resides in unincorporated areas. Between 1992 and 2006, total land developed in the unincorporated areas of the region grew by 125 percent. Besides this, present trends forecast that job centers will remain in the urbanized areas of the region.

Unless we are able to keep development close to our existing population centers, we will continue to consume valuable natural resources, open space and agricultural land and further degrade our quality of life.





When considering the cost of transportation as part of a household budget, greater commuting distances between work and home will further erode housing affordability in Northwest Indiana. Additionally, because much of the form of this growth is occurring as low density housing (82 percent of the region's residential areas), we are consuming land at a much higher rate than the population growth.



URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

Shifting the focus of development to established communities represents the foundation of the physical element of the CRP. By adopting the following strategies and concentrating growth around existing infrastructure, we will be able to use funds efficiently and aid our communities in providing a high quality of life.

STRATEGY 1:

REINVEST

Infill Development and Adaptive Reuse

Infill population and employment growth will require the reuse of previously developed lands for new and creative projects. Many downtown areas in the region also have experienced significant infill development in their revitalization efforts. Similarly, adaptive reuse is the conversion, update and/or expansion of a building originally designed for one purpose to a different and new one.

Prime regional examples of both infill and reuse include:

- U.S. Steel Yard (Gary South Shore RailCats stadium), downtown Gary
- Dalton Arms Apartments, Fifth Avenue, downtown Gary
- Towle Theater, downtown Hammond
- Center Street housing development, Whiting
- Franklin Street Art District in Michigan City
- New Town West, downtown Crown Point

Suburban Retrofit / Sprawl Repair

Suburban retrofit could be considered on a small- or large-scale basis. This technique involves reworking conventional, automobile-oriented areas, like single-use housing developments, office parks and shopping centers, into more walkable/bikeable, mixed-use, transit-ready urban places.

Valparaiso's Central Park Plaza represents an outstanding example of a successful suburban retrofit that will become a landmark for civic activity for years to come.



Implement the Marquette Plan

The Marquette Plan: The Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy represents a vanguard initiative for our Lake Michigan shoreline. The overall goal aims to create a livable lakefront by enhancing its role as a destination and a place that attracts new residents and investment. A series of “catalytic” projects has been proposed, and several completed, since the plan’s release in 2005.

Marquette Plan projects include:

- Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk
- Gary Marquette Park Lakefront East Master Plan
- East Chicago North Harbor Redevelopment Initiative
- Hammond Lakes Area Marquette Plan Improvement Project

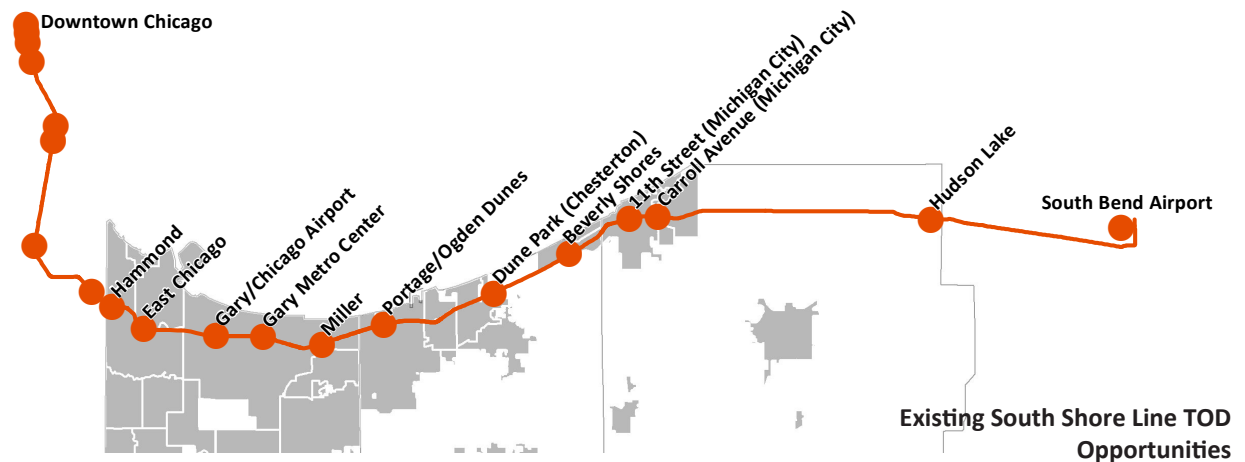
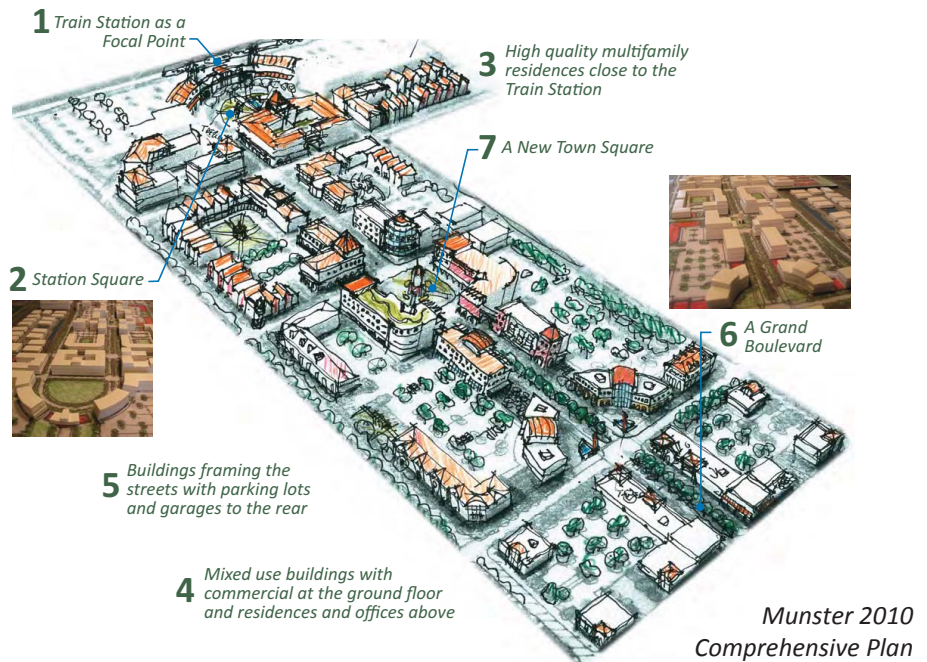
URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 2:

LINK TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Transit Oriented Development

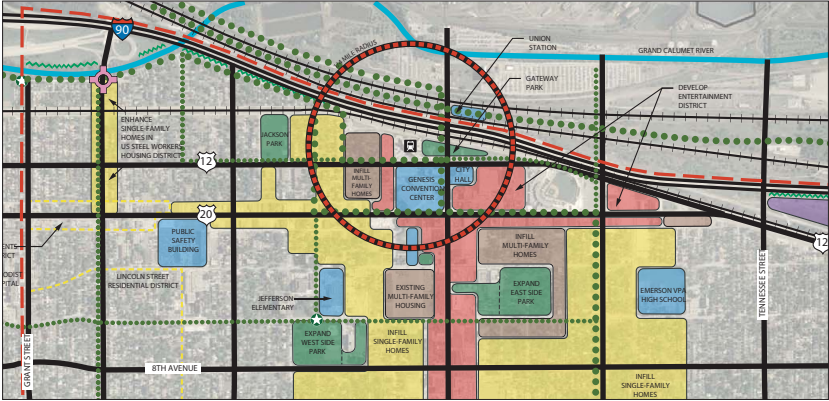
Northwest Indiana's existing transit network is a regional asset unique to the state of Indiana. The region must capitalize on these transportation assets by planning for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects. TODs take advantage of transit access, which typically attracts riders bound for work destinations. With a mixed-use living environment, including services and jobs within walkable distances from station areas, residents often can eliminate the need for unnecessary vehicular trips. The CRP identifies a regional transit framework for a system of transit-supported centers, including TODs around existing South Shore commuter stations, along the proposed West Lake Corridor and at regional bus and multimodal hubs.



TOD Concept *Portage Northside Master Plan*



Downtown TOD *Gary Comprehensive Plan*



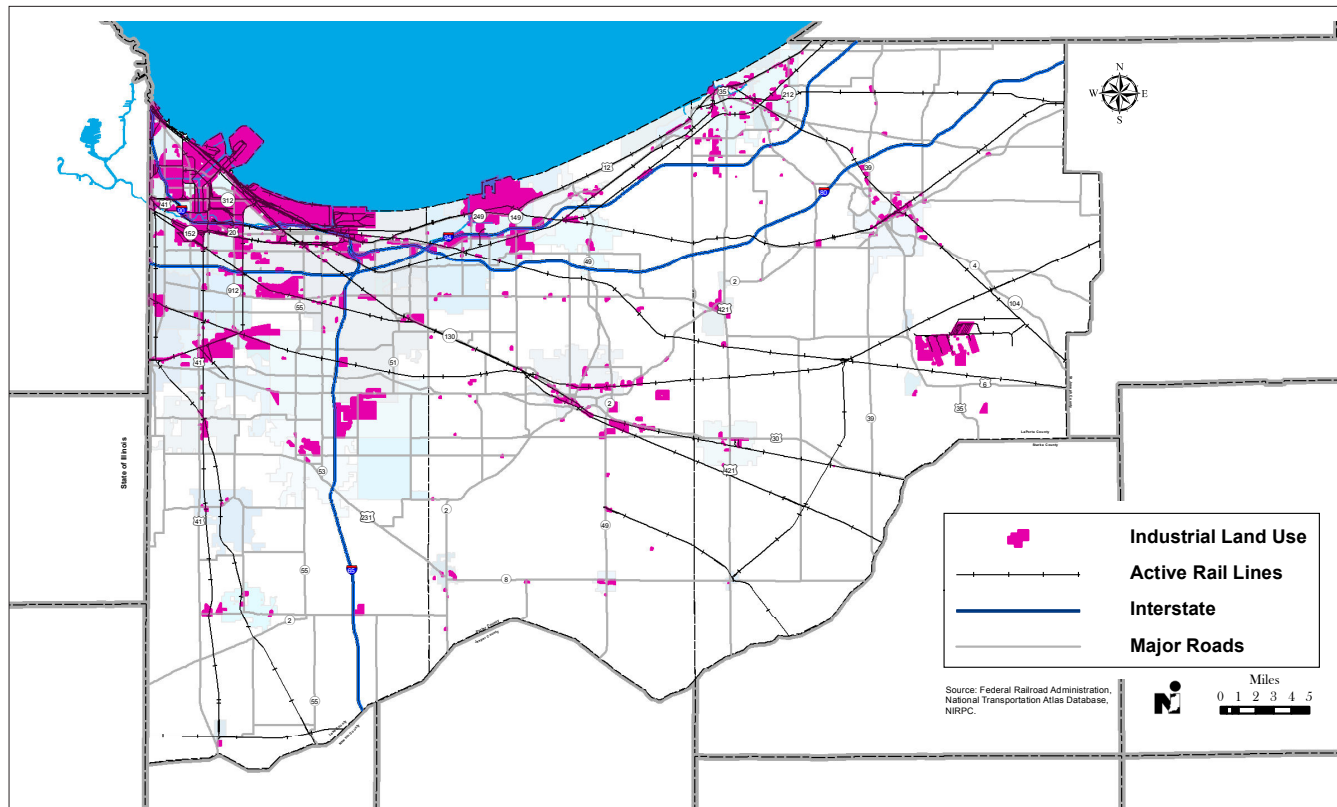
11th Street TOD Concept *The North End Plan Michigan City*



URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 2 (CONTINUED):

LINK TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE



Potential
Cargo-Oriented
Development Sites

Freight-Supportive Land Use Planning

NIRPC is working with its partners in the public and private sectors to identify ways to capitalize on the region's freight infrastructure and generate opportunities for substantial economic returns. Significant land tracts are available along truck and freight lines. Many of these sites are former industrial properties (brownfields) or underutilized land that could be brought back into more productive use as cargo-oriented development for the benefit of the community and region.

Corridor Studies

Corridor studies are a key planning activity undertaken by NIRPC. Corridor studies usually coordinate transportation and land use activities along a major transportation link, such as a state highway or transit corridor, toward the development of a comprehensive vision for that proposed corridor.

Regionally significant multimodal corridors identified for the 2040 CRP

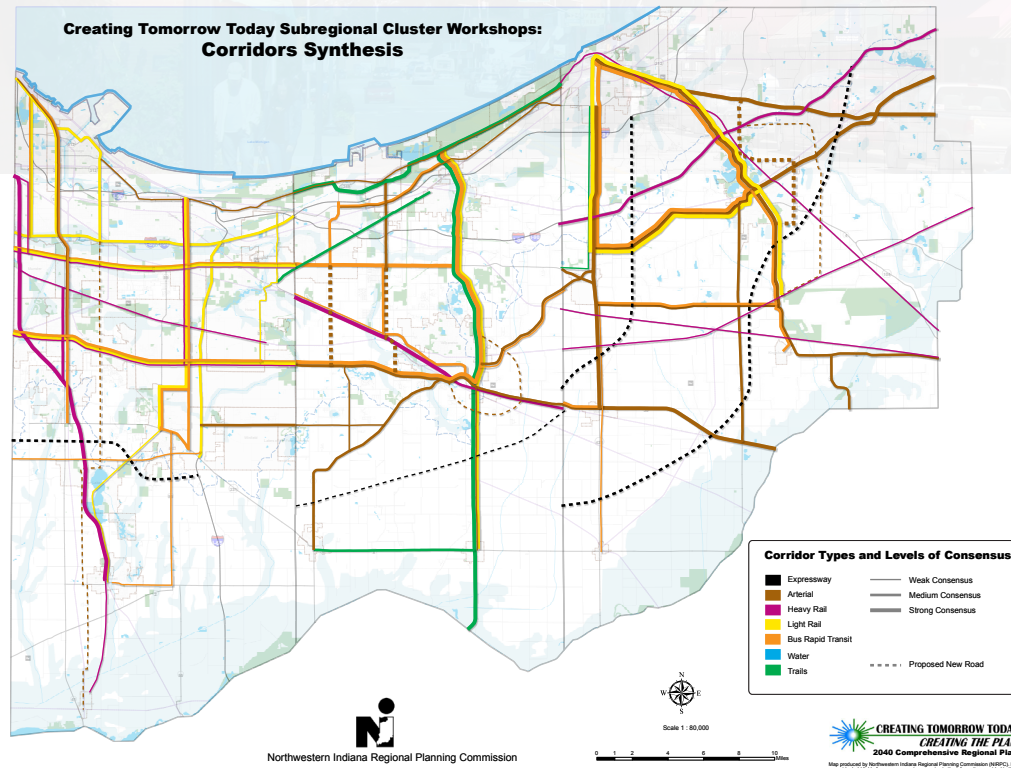


Image from the 2008 NIRPC Porter County U.S. 12/20 Transportation Corridor Plan

URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 3:

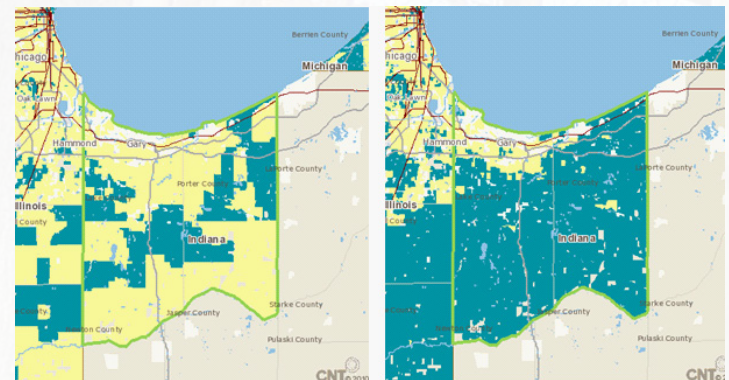
NEW WAYS TO DETERMINE AND ADDRESS HOUSING NEEDS

A region of livable centers with a vibrant, revitalized urban core requires a variety of housing to accommodate its residents.

The range of choices should include housing for people of all income levels and for people in different phases of life - including younger and older families, seniors, singles and empty-nesters. As highlighted in the Livable Centers strategy, emphasis will be placed on encouraging the compact and diverse mixing of housing types and affordability levels near job centers and transit routes. There are many parts of the region where neighborhoods are in decline and housing is of poor quality and not considered affordable. Facilitating the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the maintenance of quality and affordable housing will help to stabilize neighborhoods. Affordable housing finance tools, including loans, grants, inclusionary practices and other methods, will be necessary to realize this objective.



HOPE IV Horace Mann development, Gary



Yellow = Affordable; Blue = Unaffordable

Center for Neighborhood Technology Comparison of Traditional Affordability Metrics with Housing + Transportation Affordability Index for Lake and Porter counties

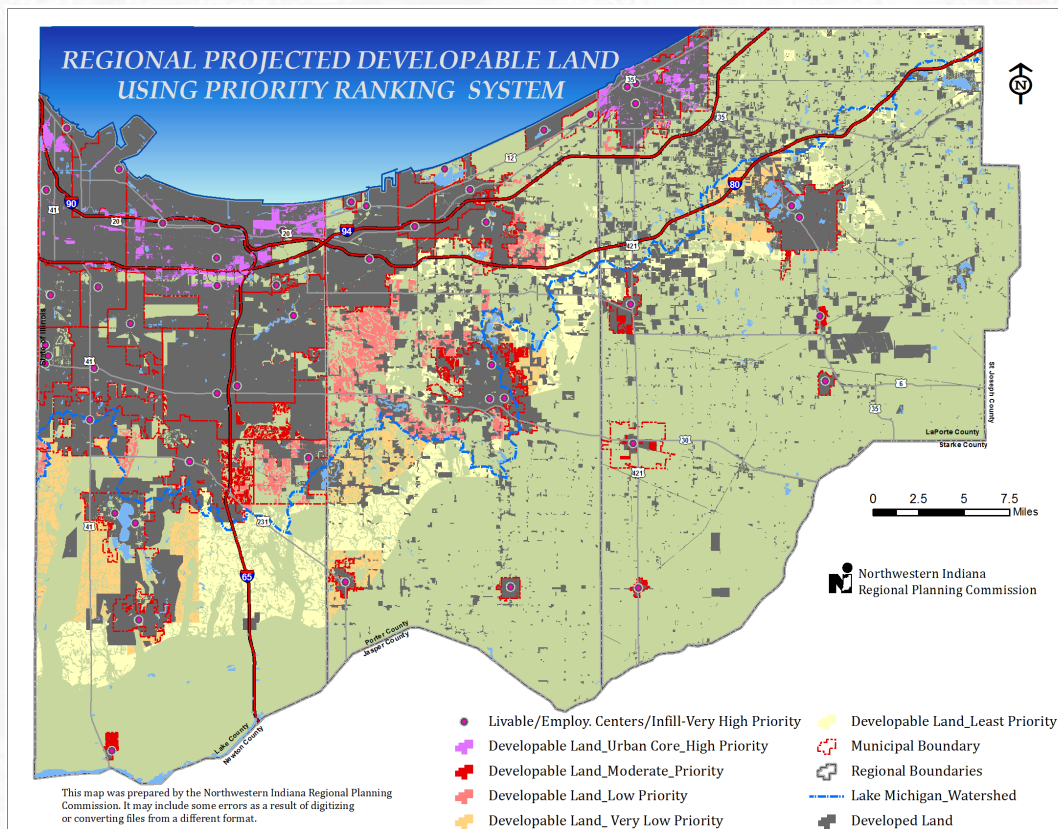


The Growth and Revitalization Vision for Northwest Indiana is an overall framework for the region's expansion and development pattern. It is based on supporting local plans while encouraging the formation and strengthening of livable centers, efficient positioning of infrastructure and limiting development in rural and environmentally sensitive areas. Land suitability analysis provides a valuable tool to assist the region's counties, communities and stakeholders in understanding where development may be most appropriate.

Factors include the availability of infrastructure and utilities, proximity to preferred growth and infill areas and the presence of important natural and water resources. The result is a prioritization and ranking of land, within the context of CRP policy, most suitable for sustainable development. This will guide local planning activities toward sound and informed development decisions.

STRATEGY 4:

SMARTER LAND USE DECISIONS THROUGH LAND SUITABILITY



URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 5: GREEN CITIES

Green Streets

Streets comprise a significant portion of the paved surfaces throughout the region and are a major source of stormwater drainage, or runoff. A green street is a corridor that is designed with less water-tight or impervious surfaces and more landscaped and functional green space in order to capture and absorb stormwater.

Several common practices for greening streets include:

- ***Skinny Streets:*** By reducing the width of the street, the amount of impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff is reduced.
- ***Bioswales:*** Vegetated open drainage channels designed to accept water runoff, disperse it and absorb it in the ground.
- ***Stormwater Capturing Curb Extensions:*** An excavated area behind a reinforced curb with accommodations for stormwater and landscaping with appropriate vegetation.
- ***Permeable Pavement:*** Paving material that allows rainwater to pass through surface.
- ***Street Trees:*** The leaf canopy intercepts, slows and filters rainwater, preventing it from hitting the ground or giving it time to percolate into the soil.

Trail Creek Re-Use Plan, Michigan City



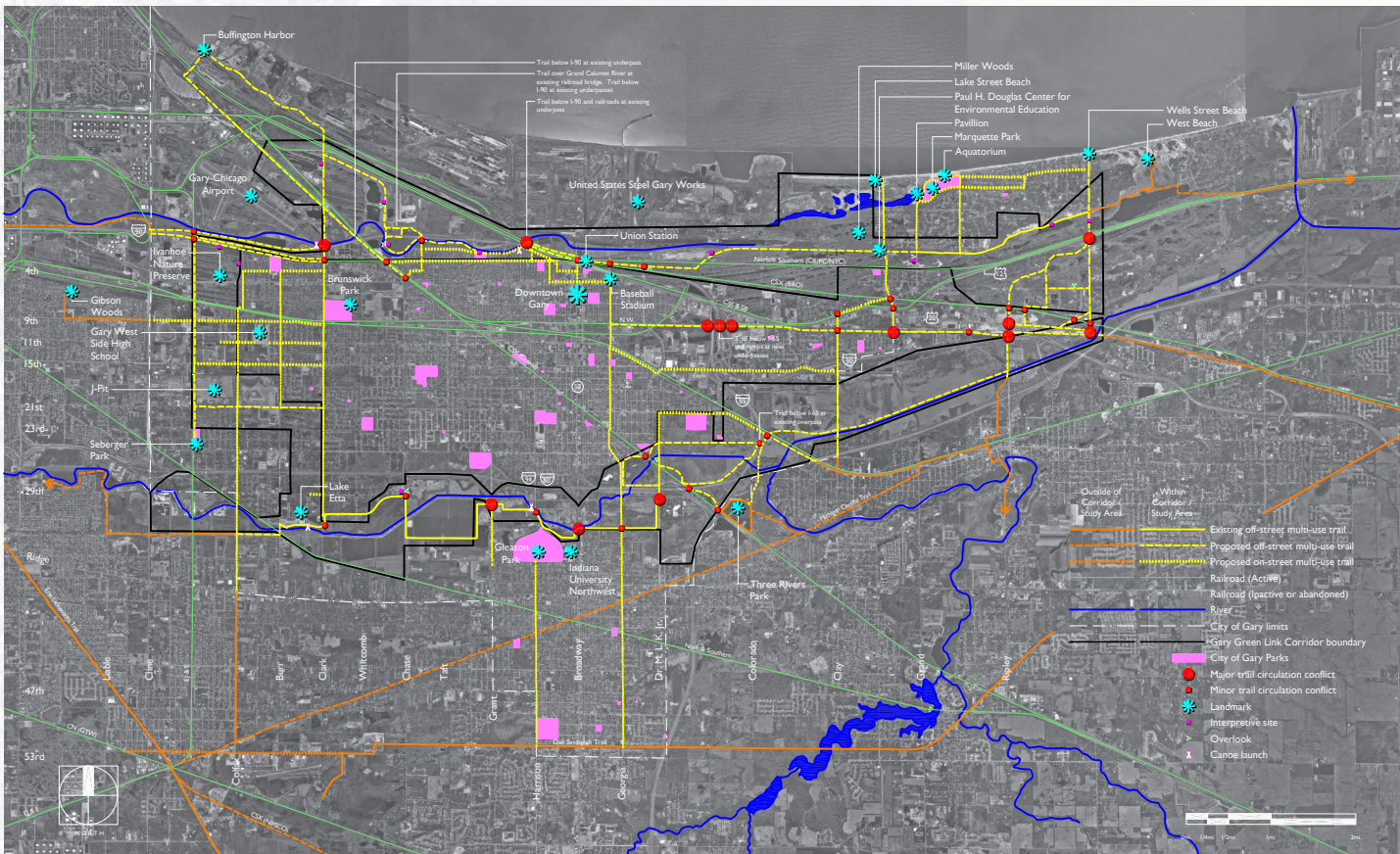


Image from the Gary Green Link plan: a master planned, 30-mile multi-use trail that connects the Lake Michigan shoreline with the Little Calumet and Grand Calumet rivers.

Link Open Space Fragments

Many Northwest Indiana ecosystems have become fragmented over many years of urban development. Small pockets of surprisingly high-quality natural areas still exist, though. The protection and linking of these open spaces and ecosystems are important for air and water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat, recreation, scenic landscapes and an overall improved quality of life. The CRP recommends linking the remaining fragments of key open space that exist within the urbanized areas.

Urban Agriculture

A network of urban agricultural practices is emerging in Northwest Indiana. These have proven to be an effective means of reusing property and strengthening community bonds. NIRPC is taking the first step in developing a Local Food Systems Study to foster the development of a local food economy in the region.

URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 6:

WORK TOGETHER

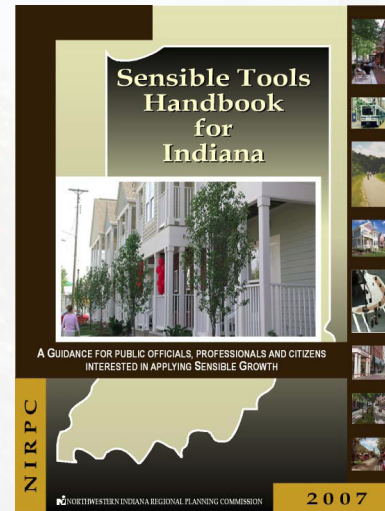
Provide Technical Assistance to Incorporate the CRP into Local Plans

The CRP is intended to serve as guidance for local plans and a means to encourage sound and informed planning decisions through the integration of local and regional priorities.

But the recommendations of the CRP are not a substitute for, and will not supersede, local land-use planning. Just as local plans guided the development of the CRP, local contexts and decisions will influence how these recommendations are implemented.

Secure Support from Washington, D.C.

New federal funding streams are being made available to regions. These include grants for planning and infrastructure for which NIRPC is eligible to apply. NIRPC also is in a unique position to provide feedback to federal representatives. Coordination between local, regional and federal levels of government is essential to removing barriers to livable communities.



In 2007, NIRPC published the Sensible Tools Handbook for Indiana, a guidebook for local implementation of sensible growth principles.



Breaking ground on runway 12-30 at Gary/Chicago International Airport



South Shore Lakefront Redevelopment, Gary and East Chicago

Provide Support for Regional Initiatives

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Partner with the RDA: The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) is a valuable partner with NIRPC in implementing infrastructure and reinvestment projects in Northwest Indiana. The RDA's enabling legislation specified four project priorities, all of which overlap with NIRPC's planning mission:

- Expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport
- Extension of the South Shore commuter rail system
- Creation of a regionalized bus transit system
- Restoration of the Lake Michigan shoreline

Gary/Chicago International Airport Development: Northwest Indiana's largest airport, the Gary/Chicago International Airport (GCIA), long has been a cornerstone for economic development in the region. The airport has commenced a three-phase capital improvement program. When completed, GCIA will be a major commercial aviation center, similar in size to the Indianapolis International Airport. GCIA also presents opportunities for a multimodal passenger center and as the anchor of a logistics- and cargo-oriented district.

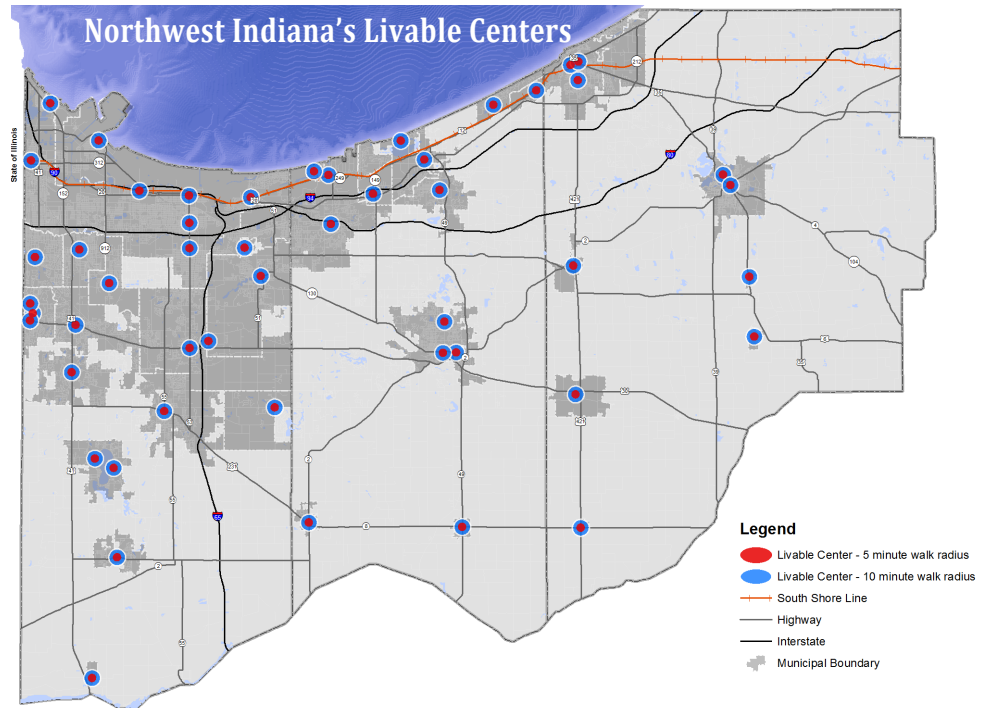
Gary and Region Investment Project: The Gary and Region Investment Project (GRIP) is a multiyear revitalization initiative sponsored by The Times Media Co. as part of its One Region, One Vision initiative. This project, which includes technical assistance from the Metropolitan Planning Council, aims to bring together local community leaders, regional stakeholders, national experts and federal representatives to develop an investment strategy for Northwest Indiana's urban core, primarily northern Lake County. It is seeking consensus around a set of major projects identified in previous plans.

URBAN FRAMEWORK STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 7:

CREATE LIVABLE CENTERS

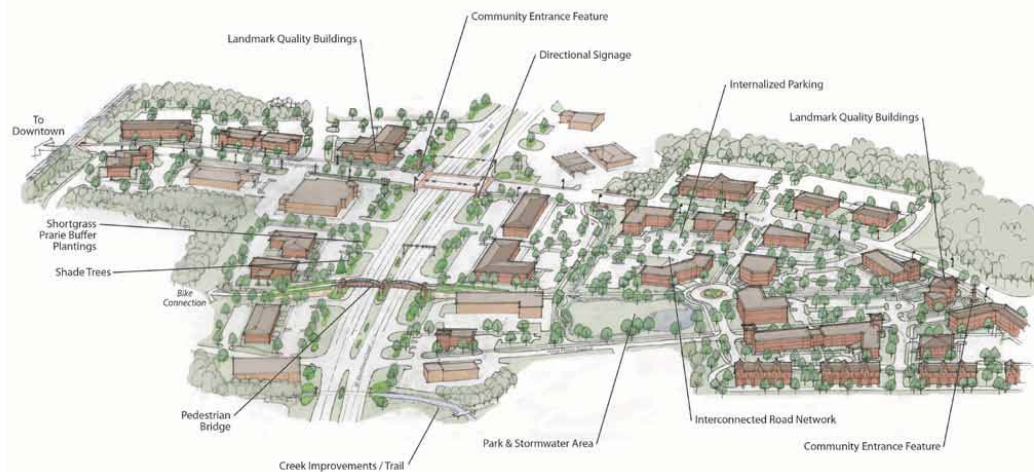
The development of “Livable Centers” within the Growth & Infill areas is fundamental to achieving the preferred regional strategy for land use, transportation and environmental balance in Northwest Indiana. Stakeholders clearly identified the elements of the Livable Centers concept – walkability, mixed uses, infill development – as part of the region’s goal-setting exercise. The region’s potential Livable Centers are identified in the Growth and Revitalization Vision and the Regional Planning Areas map.



Downtown & US 20 Corridor Plan, Burns Harbor *North Harbor Redevelopment Initiative, East Chicago*



Trail Creek Re-Use Plan, Michigan City



U.S. 30 Corridor Plan, Valparaiso



The Ind. 49 Lakeshore Gateway Sub-Area Plan "Gateway to the Indiana Dunes"

Livable Centers support existing communities.

They attract public investment to encourage a sustainable pattern of population and employment growth that maximizes the use of areas already served by roads and utilities.

Livable Centers are connected.

They promote regional connectivity and are supportive of public transportation.

Livable Centers are compact.

They support a vibrant mix of uses within a concentrated, accessible area.

Livable Centers are walkable.

They promote non-motorized opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists and provide convenient and safe alternatives to driving for local trips.

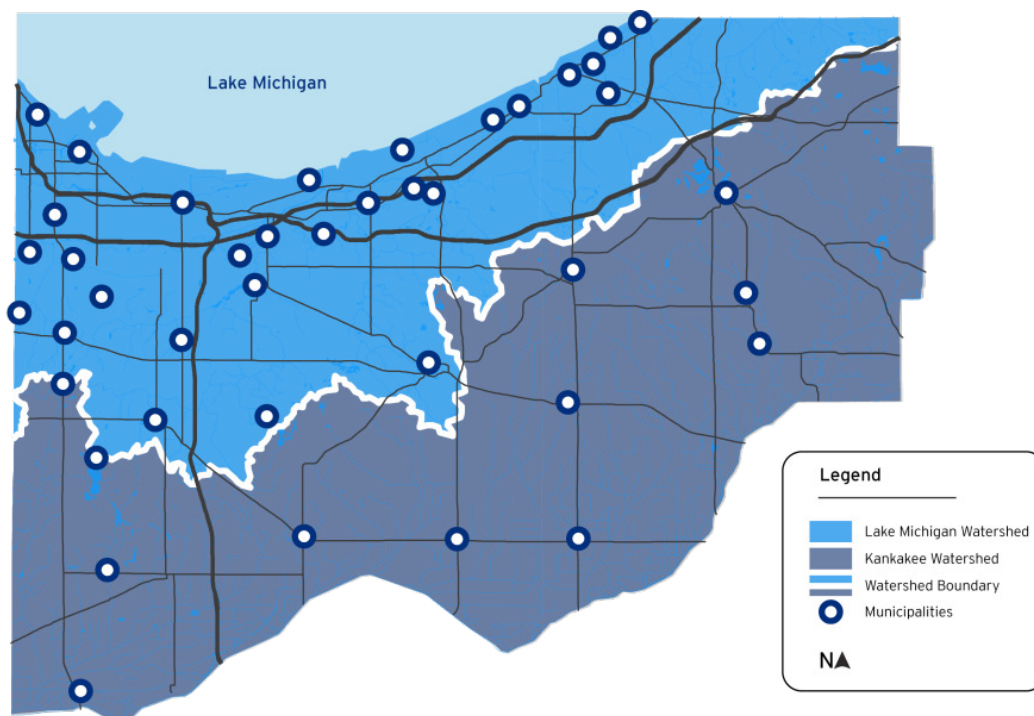
RURAL & UNINCORPORATED FRAMEWORK

Conservation of Northwest Indiana's open lands is a key organizing principle of the CRP. While the development of Livable Centers throughout the region will reduce the need to develop our natural and working landscapes, this section suggests strategies to manage these valuable resources as our population grows.

The vast majority of rural and unincorporated lands in Northwest Indiana lies in the southern part of the region within the Kankakee River Basin.

30

While unincorporated and rural areas do exist north of these areas, this happens to be where some of the region's larger and faster-growing communities are located. Of the 41 communities in the three-county area, 29 are located within the Lake Michigan watershed. As discussed in more detail in the section on Environment and Green Infrastructure, there are many pristine environments and natural systems within the Kankakee River Basin.



Preserving the Region's Rural Character and Resources

The CRP focuses on the protection of natural resources while supporting the agricultural and rural economy, as well as allowing for limited compatible nonfarm development.

REFORM UNINCORPORATED LAND DIVISION

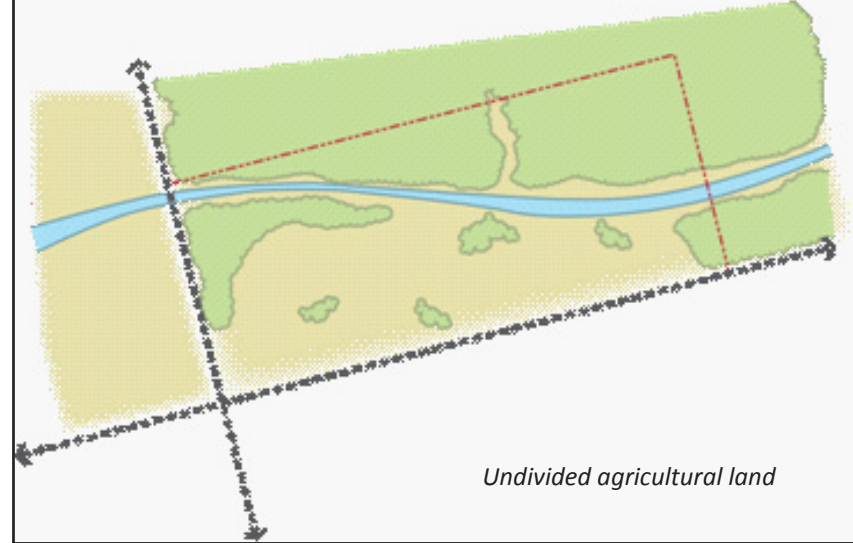
All three counties in Northwest Indiana allow for the division of agricultural lands for nonfarm land uses - primarily single-family residential uses. These land divisions do not require the creation of a subdivision, the dedication of public ways or the installation of utilities. The lack of control over these land divisions has the potential for a number of negative consequences:

- Roadway access issues/conflicts
- Groundwater contamination
- Stream and drainage way obstruction
- Soil erosion
- Unnecessary loss of productive farmland

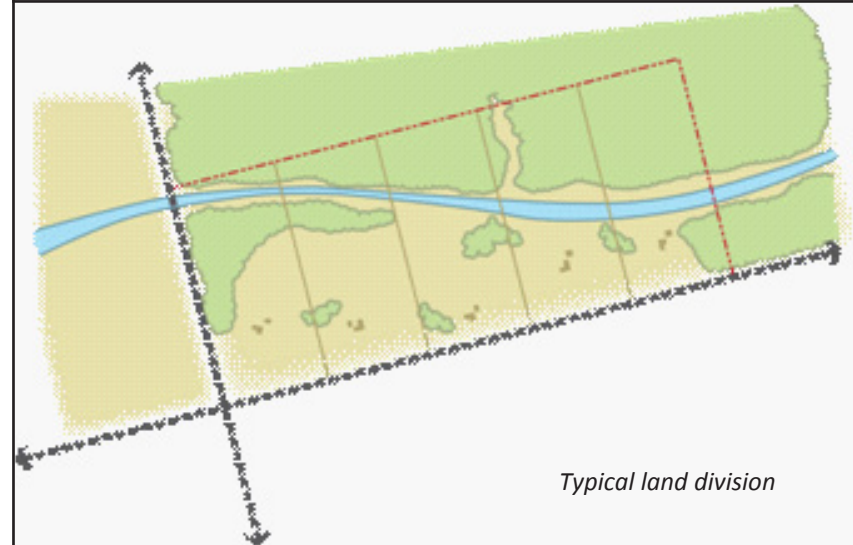
The CRP recommends the creation of a development plan review process that offers incentives for site planning to avoid these conflicts. An example of a progressive strategy would include clustering development away from sensitive areas of a site.

PROVIDE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

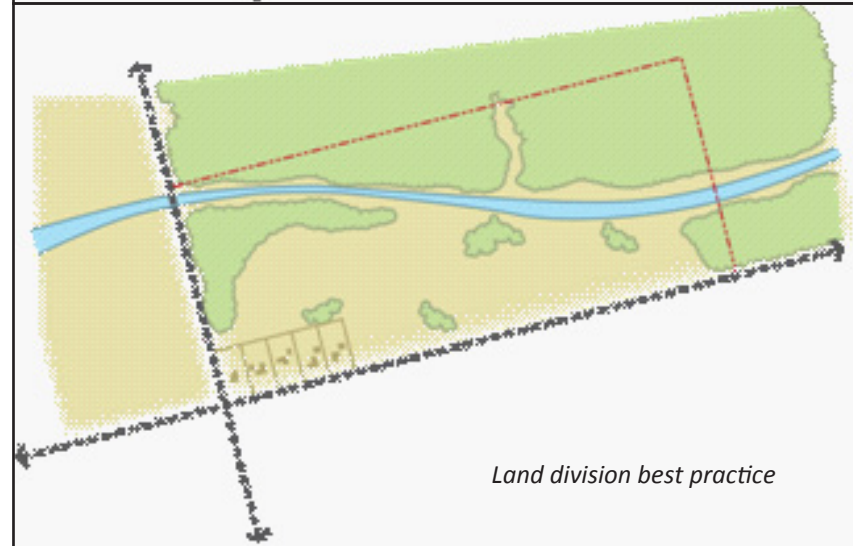
Recommendations for local assistance that would advance the goals of the CRP include local area plans, corridor studies, conservation design approaches and agricultural protection tools.



Undivided agricultural land



Typical land division



Land division best practice

RURAL & UNINCORPORATED FRAMEWORK

DEVELOP OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Food, like water and shelter, is essential for sustaining us.

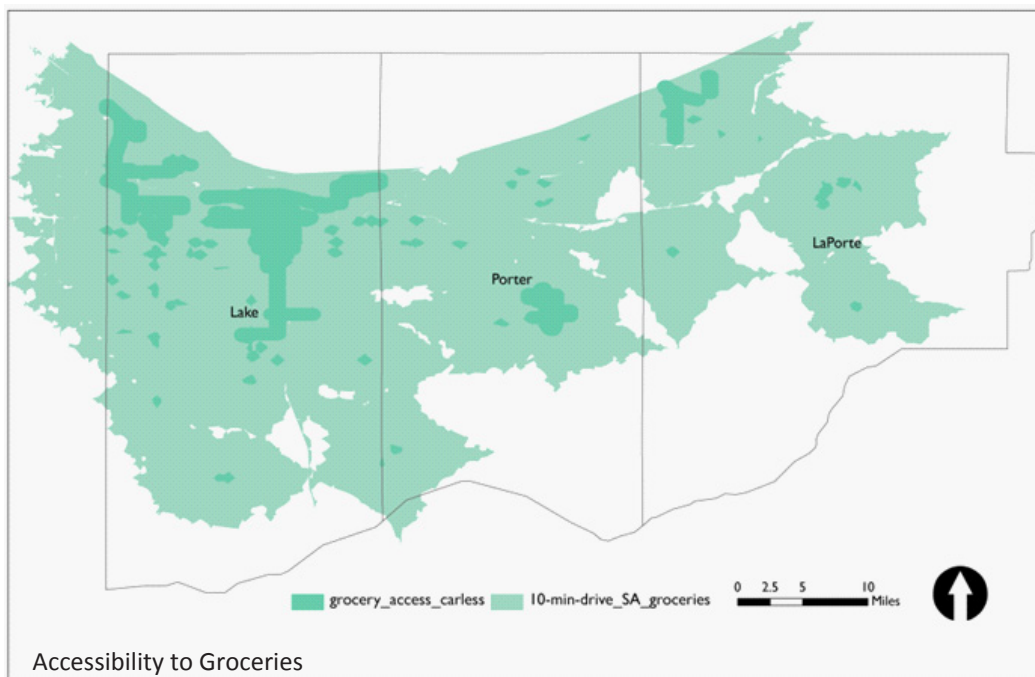
Yet we rarely take time to ask where our food comes from, how it gets to our tables, and whether we will be able to feed ourselves next month or next year, let alone in 2040.

An objective of the CRP is to foster the development of local food systems and a local food economy. A robust local food system will enhance our vision of a vibrant and accessible region, supporting the health of all people and places. NIRPC currently is conducting a local food study for the region, which focuses on a number of critical issues.

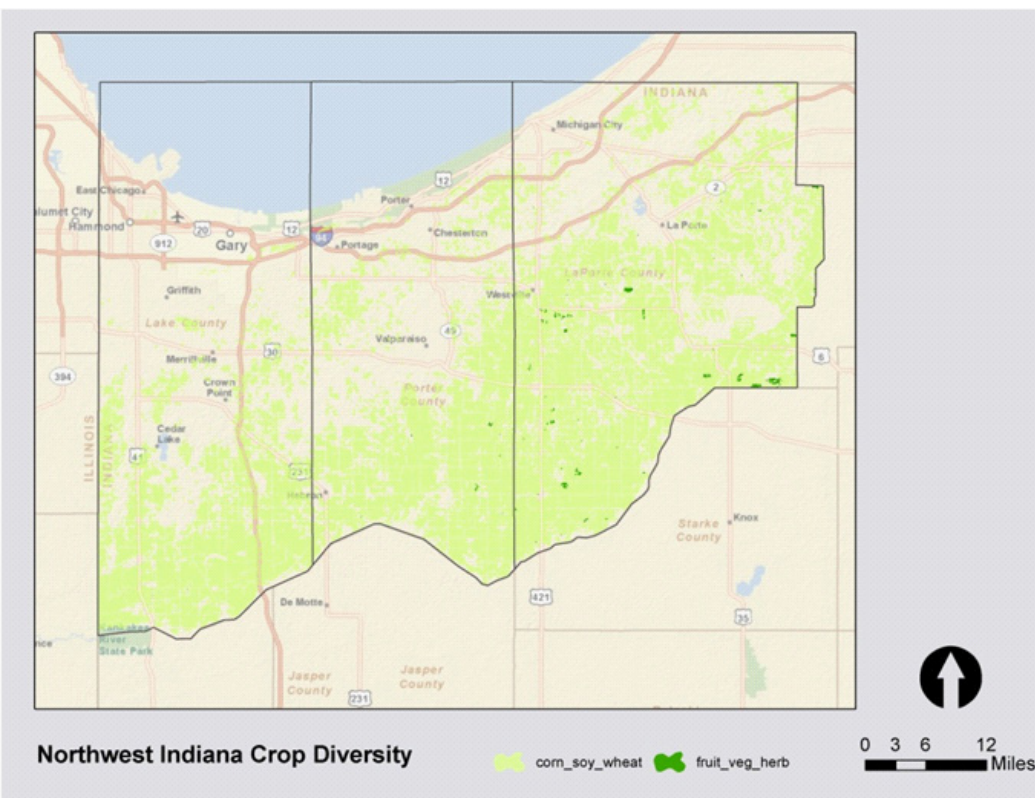
32



European Market, Chesterton



Accessibility to Groceries



Northwest Indiana Crop Diversity

Accessibility of Local Food

The success of our local food system will depend on creating efficient ways of getting local foods from our fields to our residents. Transporting local foods to their destination is one piece of the puzzle. The other is getting residents to the distribution centers (groceries, farmstands, etc.). At this time, there are limited public transit options that provide convenient access to local food.

Local Food and Land Use

With more than half of our region's land devoted to agriculture, the CRP targets managed growth to protect these areas. There are also many opportunities to convert vacant urban properties into a network of urban farms, creating a direct link for low-income communities to access high-quality produce.

Local Food and the Environment

Growing a local food system in Northwest Indiana has the potential to protect and enhance our environmental assets. As such, local food can be a tool to advocate for the health of the soil and water resources in our region.

NICTD

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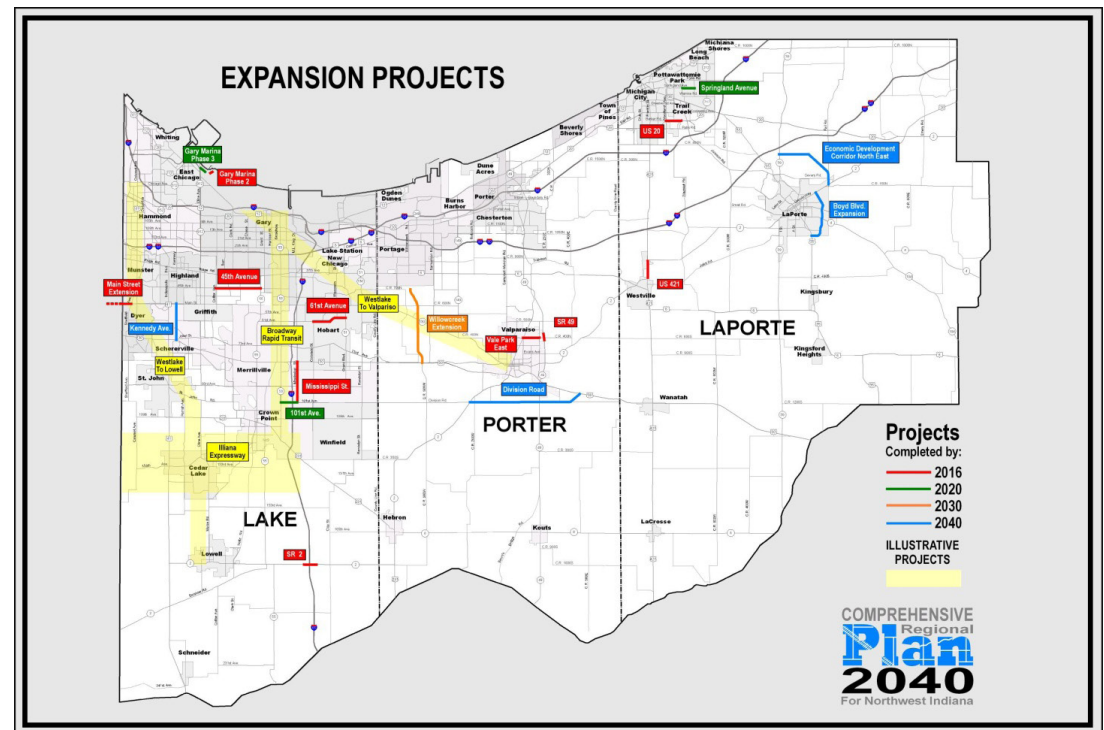


NICTD Station

Chapter II: Transportation

OUR GOALS:

- A safe and secure transportation system
- Increased mobility, accessibility and transportation options for people and freight
- Adequate transportation funding and efficient use of resources
- A transportation system that supports the health of all people



FACING REALITY / TRANSPORTATION

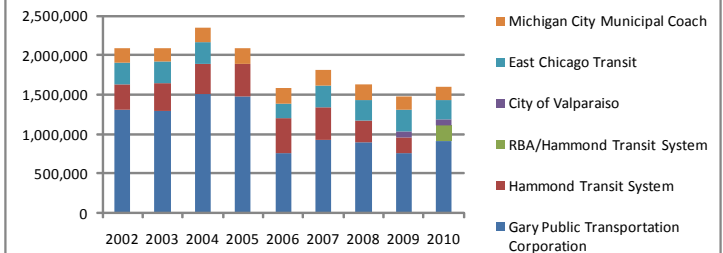
The legacy of Northwest Indiana's transportation network plays a central role in supporting and maintaining the region's quality of life. Nearly all modes of transport exist in our three-county region. A critical element of our region's economic success is our ability to move people and goods in a safe, efficient and effective manner. However, transportation is inadequately funded and major infrastructure improvements are needed to attract jobs and rebuild our core cities.

Central to other important needs in the CRP is a stronger emphasis on the provision of a quality transit service. The system as it stands today has no dedicated local funding source despite the need of many who are "transit dependent" because of household income, age or disability. An expanded and accessible public transit system is critical in creating a region that is truly vibrant, accessible and equitable.

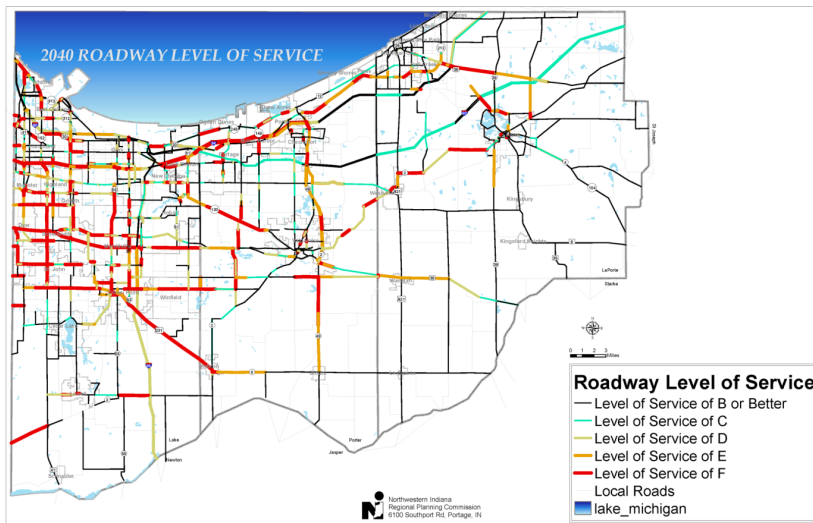
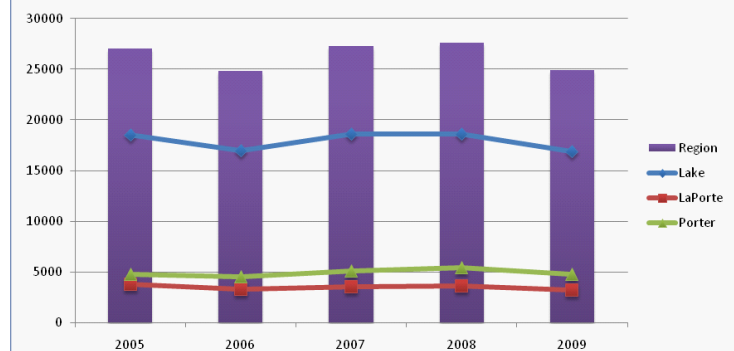
Beyond these limitations, there are significant opportunities as well. These include our robust shipping, freight and non-motorized networks.

Coupling our transportation strengths with our needs will be key in providing a solid multimodal network from which everyone in the region will prosper.

Fixed Route Ridership



All Crashes in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties: 2005-2009



The intermodal nature of Northwest Indiana’s transportation system offers the greatest long-term benefits to our region. A challenge that the CRP addresses involves how Livable Centers will take advantage of the region’s vast transportation options by moving more people from inefficient means of travel, to those modes that enhance our environment, health and quality of life.

ROADWAY NETWORK

Of all the transportation modes in use, by far the most prevalent are our roadways. Since the end of World War II, our primary means of getting around has been the automobile. In addition, over the past three decades, trucking has overtaken railroads as the chief means to ship goods. The result has put an enormous strain on our existing road network, with increased congestion and deteriorating infrastructure. In response, community leaders continue to call for expansion projects – such as widening roads or building new ones – while local funds dry up for repairing their existing network.

Clearly a new way of thinking must be advocated. **The CRP’s emphasis for our future roadway network is on increased efficiency.** Here the direction is not on expansion, but maintaining and improving our existing roads. A number of activities are advanced in the CRP to help meet this objective:

Utilize Congestion Management Strategies

These seek to find means to maximize the use and efficiency of existing roadway facilities. Common congestion relief practices include: travel demand management, access management, new multimodal access (such as transit), Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and a range of other activities.

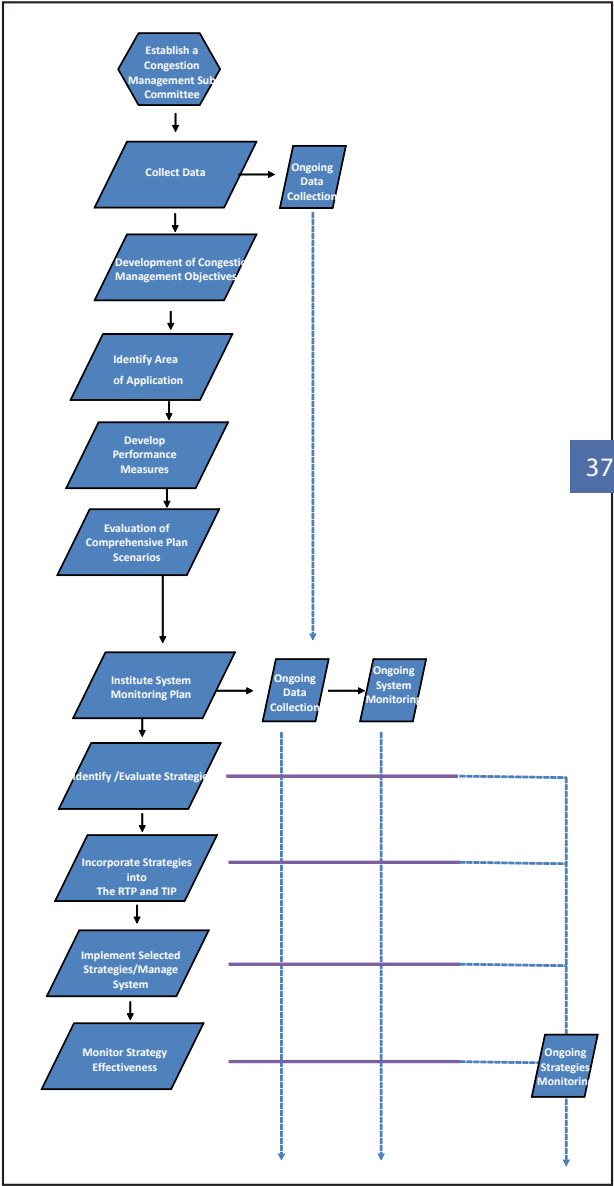
Improve System Safety

While the CRP has identified a range of safety improvements that could be made on the network, roadway and railroad grade separations would be a major safety enhancement in the region. Projects that help reach the goals of the CRP will score high and eventually be constructed when the funding becomes available.

Reform Project Selection Methodology

Noteworthy is that the project selection criteria now in use by NIRPC likely will be further refined in future years. These emphasize proximity to livable centers, revitalization and infill locations and other land-use measures.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES



Traditional Congestion Management Process Steps

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Critical to the success of our region is the availability of transit options.

Simply stated, our current network of public transportation systems is not sufficient to achieve the goals set out in the CRP. Many portions of Northwest Indiana are underserved and lack connectivity between modes, such as train and bus. To make matters worse, declining federal, state and local funding subsidies, and the lack of a dedicated local funding source, have resulted in service cuts that further reduce ridership, and in turn hamper the quality of life of our residents.

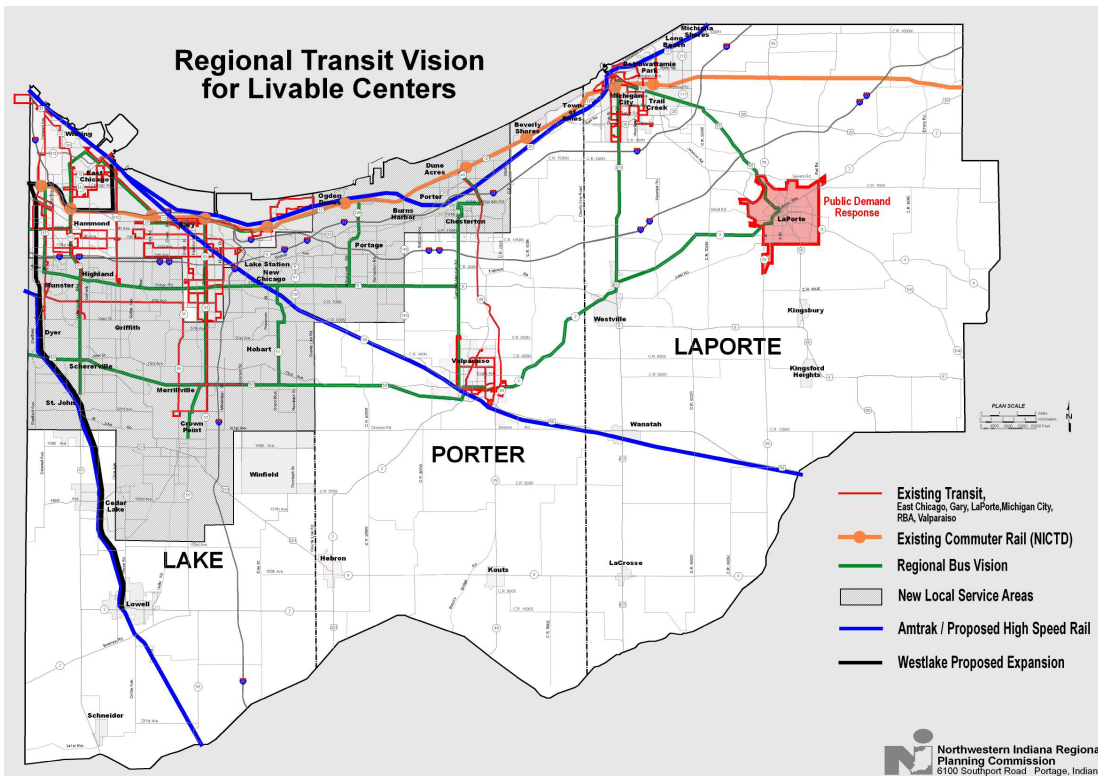
Into this challenging mix new and expanded transit services must play a critical role to fully realize the 2040 CRP Vision.

Achieving the plan's vision for Livable Centers will:

- play a key role in supporting the plan's concepts of the creation of multimodal Livable Centers (all metro, large and medium centers).
- provide a significant means of reduction on the reliance of the automobile and will reduce traffic congestion on the regional roadway network.
- fulfill a critical role in reaching underserved and transportation-deprived areas of the region since access to employment and regional services is essential for all.



The Regional Transit Vision for Northwest Indiana includes the expansion of fixed route and demand-response bus services, and the addition of premium transit services, including commuter rail and high-speed rail. The system seeks to link Livable Centers and provide access to regional transit and prime destinations such as the Gary/Chicago International Airport and the region's core communities.



Funding the Vision

Although a level of regional cooperation exists among the transit providers, Northwest Indiana lacks a comprehensive and independently funded regional transit agency that serves both the transit-dependent population and choice riders. In 2000, Lake County took the historic step of creating the Regional Transportation Authority to begin building a cohesive transit network. Today's RBA is the result of those early efforts. However, the need for a dedicated local funding source to provide predictable capital and operating support for the region's transit services is at the top of the CRP transit implementation needs.

High-capacity transit services that support desirable development patterns, including high-speed rail, commuter rail and regional bus service. Supportive fixed route, demand response and other local transit services are to be provided.

High-speed rail improvements completed in the Norfolk- Southern corridor near Lake Michigan, with both legs of the West Lake Corridor implemented to extend NICTD (South Shore) commuter rail service to Lowell and Valparaiso.

A major regional multimodal transit hub at the Gary/Chicago International Airport connecting high-speed and commuter rail and bus.

An arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) system in select major corridors. Six regional bus routes proposed in the RBA Strategic Plan provide the backbone of a network of services connecting rail stations and other activity centers.

New local bus services in areas where the population density would support it. This will be critical for connecting the Livable Centers with each other, and to the regional employment, shopping and services centers.

Expanded capacity and increased coverage for demand-response, or paratransit services in areas not served by fixed-route bus is a critical component of the regional system, especially in all of LaPorte and Porter counties, and in southern Lake County.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

AVIATION

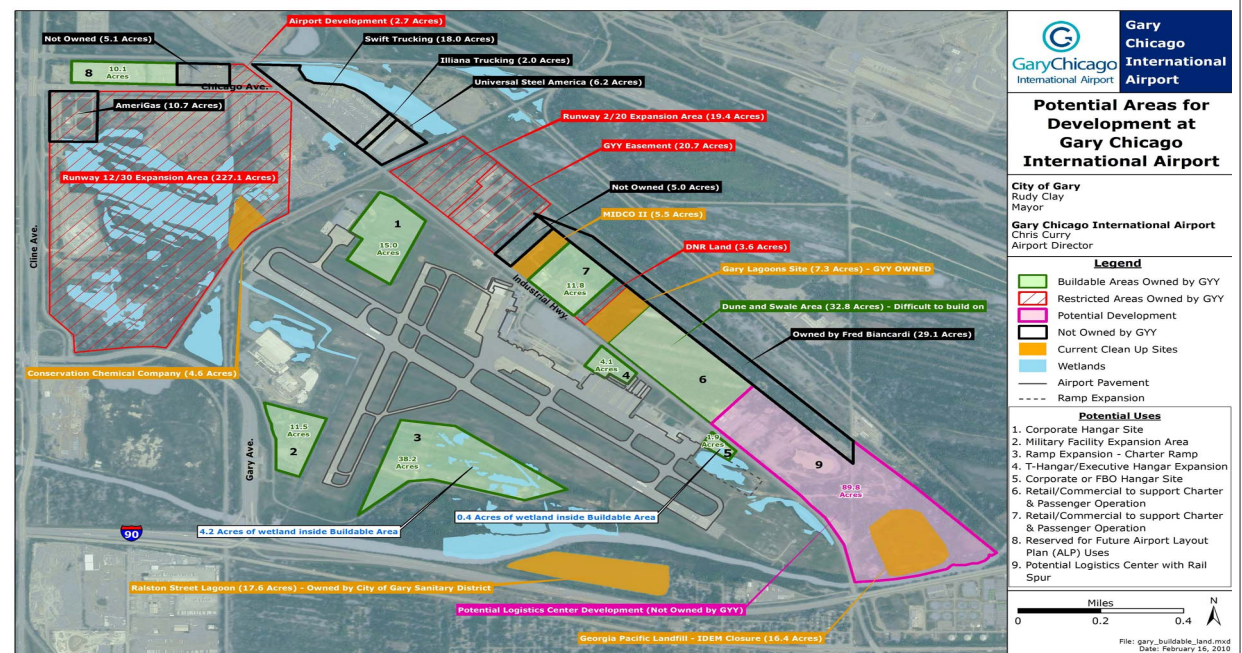
Since the days when Octave Chanute pioneered aviation science along the Indiana Dunes, our region has remained fascinated with expanding air travel.

Today, the most prominent regional location is the Gary/Chicago International Airport (GCIA), which will serve as the Chicago metropolitan region's third airport. The GCIA supplies complementary services to the larger O'Hare and Midway International airports and provides convenient access to the region's business and recreational attractions. Considering its prime location and modernized facilities, GCIA is well positioned to be a major economic generator for Northwest Indiana.

Gary/Chicago International Airport Expansion

Improvements are planned for GCIA to gain a stronger market position in both passenger and freight enplanements. The repositioning and grade separation of the CN freight rail line will allow the extension of its primary runway from 7,000 to 8,900 feet. A parallel initiative in working with the Regional Development Authority, the city of Gary and the state of Indiana is to draw collateral development, including trucking, rail freight and logistics businesses, to the airport area and the Port of Indiana. GCIA has been designated as a Foreign Trade Zone and provides significant economic incentives to investors.

EXHIBIT III-15: POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT



*Images from
Gary/Chicago
International
Airport Strategic
Business Plan*



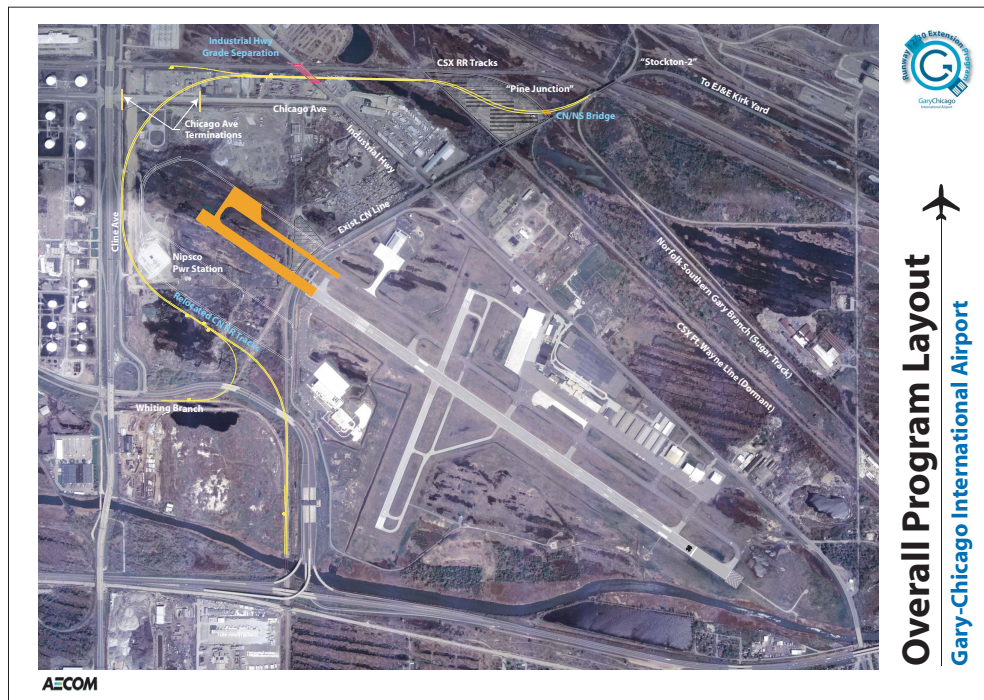
Porter County Airport Zone Development Study

The Porter County Regional Airport, the city of Valparaiso, Porter County and the Valparaiso Economic Development Corp have commissioned a plan that will facilitate the most appropriate land use, infrastructure and development initiatives, to further promote and maximize the economic development potential of a 15-square-mile area surrounding the Porter County Regional Airport.

The outcome of this project will be a plan that will create policies that guide future development around the airport, identify key catalyst projects to spur development in the

area and address annexation and funding recommendations. This plan will address the physical and economic issues and opportunities at the airport in order for this facility to development into an intermodal facility. This planning process is expected to yield detailed recommendations regarding land use, transportation, additional airport planning, shovel-ready sites and site development focusing on transit oriented design. Additionally, the plan will create strong, clear zoning recommendations that will implement this vision and policies in the plan.

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The repositioning and grade separation of the CN freight rail line will allow the extension of its primary runway from 7,000 to 8,900 feet.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION

The location of Northwest Indiana adjacent Chicago, and at the southern tip of Lake Michigan has afforded our region an unparalleled opportunity to expand upon our robust freight transport systems.

These systems will play a significant role in meeting the region's mobility and economic development activities in the foreseeable future. The focused revitalization areas of Northwest Indiana, as detailed in the CRP, possess the highest concentrations of freight intensive land uses and multimodal freight infrastructure. Since these cities also are struggling with vacant land and brownfields, redevelopment of these lands for freight-related uses represents an enormous opportunity for economic development. Support of the freight industry is focused on the following recommendations:

Support Development of Intermodal and Multimodal Freight Facilities and the Logistics Industry

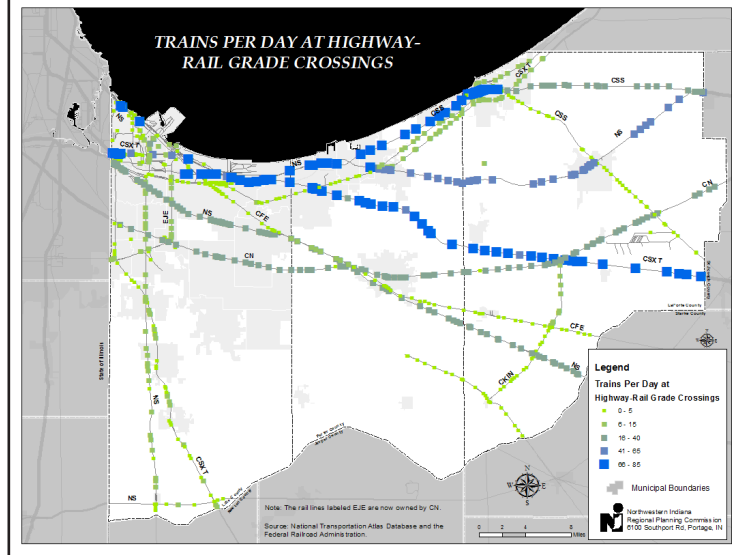
As both highways and railways become more congested, it will become increasingly important to use our transportation network as efficiently as possible. Intermodal and multimodal freight facilities, where cargo is transferred between modes, maximize the efficiency of each mode of transportation. Increased intermodalism has the potential to take trucks off the roads, improve highway safety and reduce the environmental impacts of goods movement. There is a strong consensus at the local, regional and state level that the development of multimodal freight hubs offers the potential for sustained economic growth.

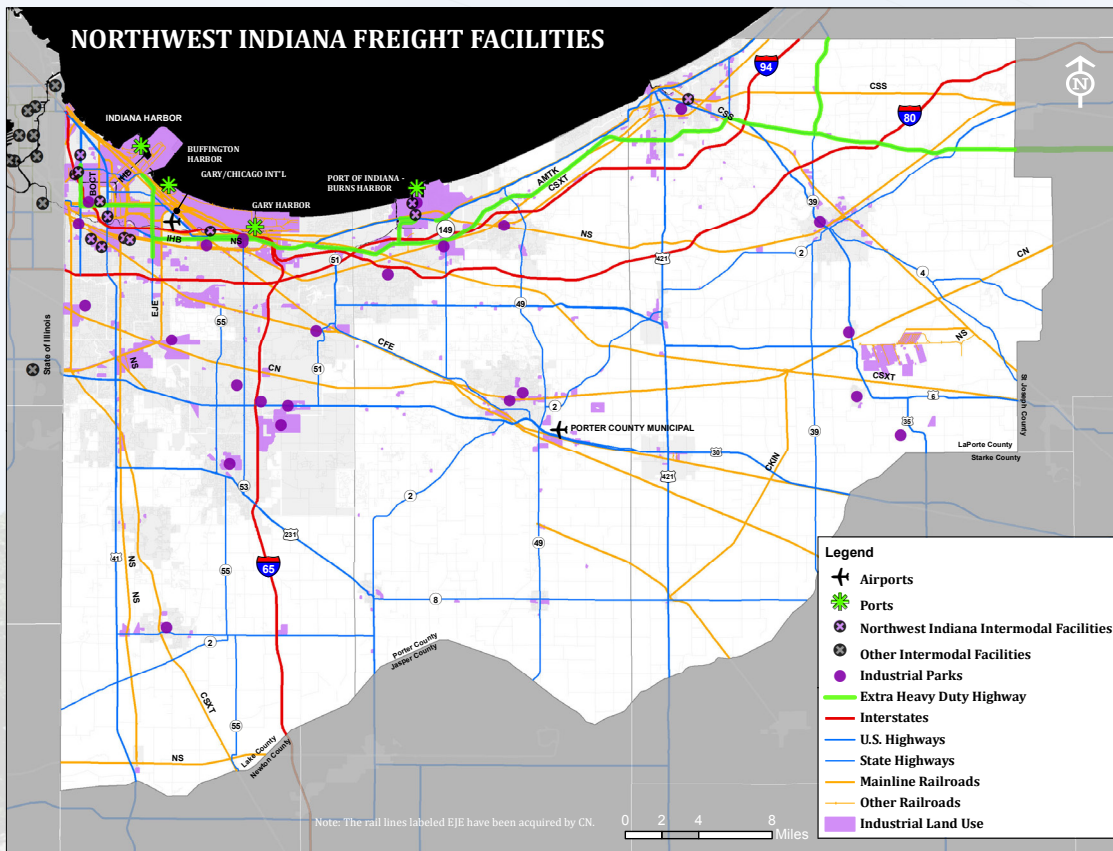
Encourage Freight Supportive Land Use Planning and Zoning

Industrial and freight-related development has its place in a livable community if it is the result of collaborative land use and transportation planning. Coordination and consensus-building between public officials and private sector operators is necessary to identify the appropriate locations for industrial and freight-related development and to develop effective multimodal links between them. Proactive community planning and land assembly can identify and resolve these issues in advance of facility proposals.

Separate Highway-Rail Grade Crossings

Highway-rail grade crossings cause significant traffic congestion and create safety issues. Grade separation would benefit freight movement for both rail and truck traffic and would increase efficiency and safety throughout the transportation system.





Improve the Extra Heavy Duty Truck Route

The Extra Heavy Duty Truck Route in Northwest Indiana is a vital link in the regional industrial freight network. These routes run from Hammond to South Bend with connections to Michigan. This network of roads originally was created to support the steel industry, but it since has been extended to serve other industries in the region and to bridge the gap between shippers in our region and beyond.

Support Rail and Maritime Policies that Encourage Mode Shift and Reduced Truck Volumes

The nation's freight network is a multimodal system. Adequate public investment should support all modes, including rail and maritime. The 2040 CRP supports local, state and national freight policies that encourage mode shift and reduce truck volumes. Examples include:

- The Port of Indiana has been advocating for "short-sea shipping" between ports on the Great Lakes.
- An "Indiana Coal Corridor" has been proposed, which would consist of railroads connecting southern coalmines with northern power plants, mainline railroads and ports. The corridor would increase the share of Indiana coal used in the state's power plants and position the state to increase exports through its Great Lakes and Ohio River ports.
- The Indiana Rail Plan recommends developing a short-haul intermodal rail corridor between Louisville and Chicago following the Interstate 65 corridor.
- Funding is needed for the construction of a new lock at the Soo Locks in Sault St. Marie, Michigan that is capable of handling larger lake freighters. The health of Northwest Indiana's industry, primarily steel, is dependent upon these freighters and their transport of raw materials through the locks. Failure to expand this would drive up costs for industry and put additional strain on the highways and railways of Northwest Indiana.

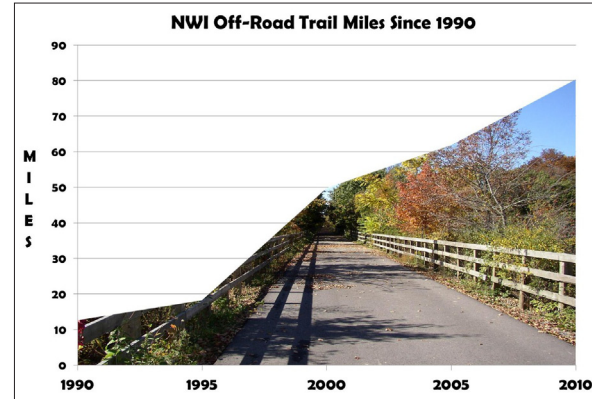
TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

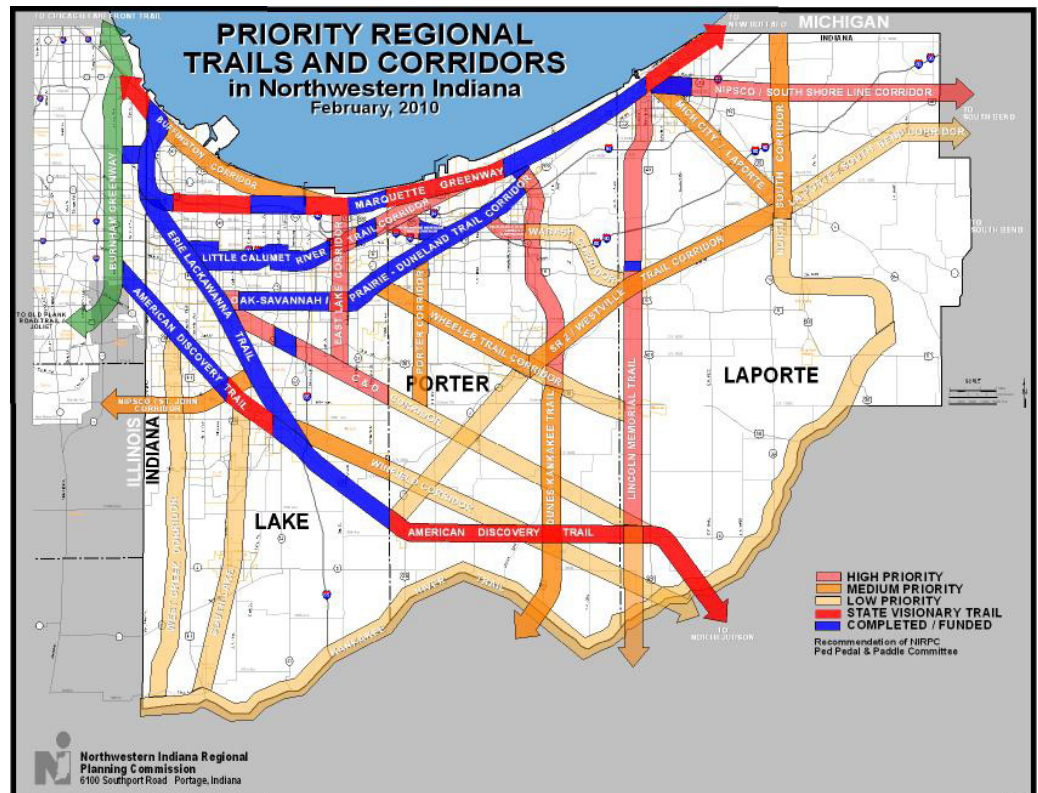
Beyond the traditional aspects of transportation that focus on motorized means, an increasing interest in non-motorized travel has emerged nationwide. Either due to obesity and health matters, or a desire to spend less at the gas pump, people are enjoying a newfound appreciation of the oldest means of transportation. To this end, Northwest Indiana is becoming a premiere location for bicycle, pedestrian and water trail travelers.

With the adoption of the Northwest Indiana Regional Greenways and Blueways Plan in 2007, the adoption of Complete Streets Guidelines in 2010 and the updated Ped and Pedal Plan of 2010, NIRPC and the region's cities and towns have committed to connecting the Northwest Indiana communities and the adjacent states of Illinois and Michigan with enhanced opportunities for active recreation and alternative transportation. The priorities and opportunities in these plans include off- and on-road facilities, as well as water trail routes, which in turn will help create a more accessible region with a transportation system that supports the health of its users.

NIRPC seeks to create a non-motorized transportation culture in Northwest Indiana. To accomplish this, a number of policies, strategies and opportunities have been identified.



Northwest Indiana is becoming a premiere location for bicycle, pedestrian and water trail travelers.



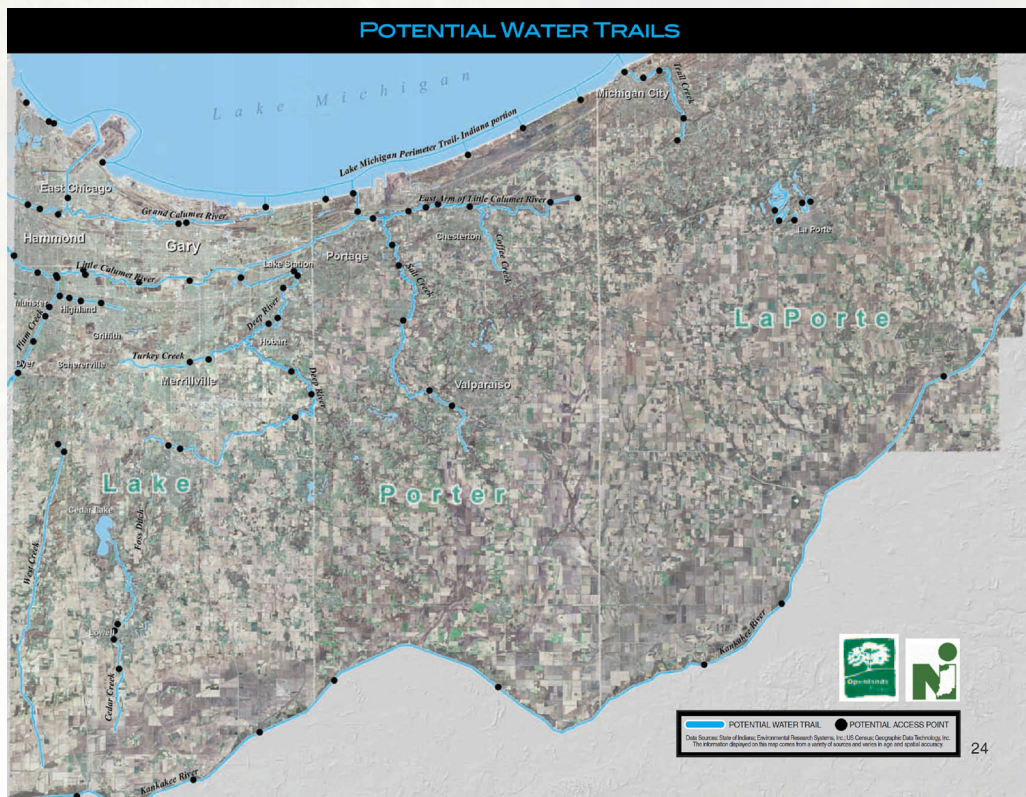
Prioritize Trail Development to Establish a Regional Network

Twenty-eight potential corridors were identified and categorized. The outcome is a network of corridors that connect the region's Livable Centers and major scenic areas.

Establish a Regional Trail Network along Abandoned Rail Corridors

There are several advantages of using railroad rights-of-way for bikeway development. Abandoned railroad rights-of-way can stretch through an entire region and connect several municipalities. For this reason, abandoned railroad rights-of-way should continue to be used to form the backbone of a regional trail network that connects municipalities and their trail networks with regional trails, as well as trail facilities outside of the region.

For the first time, the physically navigable water trails for canoes and kayaks in the region have been identified and mapped out in NIRPC's Greenways and Blueways Plan.



Partner with Utility Providers to Use Utility Corridors

Similar to railroad rights-of-way, utility corridors provide a linear and generally unobstructed and undeveloped corridor for trail development. In Northwest Indiana, the Northern Indiana Public Service Co., or NIPSCO, has been instrumental in the development of new multi-use trails, and additional opportunities should be pursued.

Use Natural Features to Develop Greenways

Open corridors adjacent to natural features, such as rivers and streams, provide additional opportunities to establish contiguous trail networks. In Northwest Indiana, these opportunities are abundant and provide both local and regional recreational options.

Develop Water Trails According to the Greenways and Blueways Plan

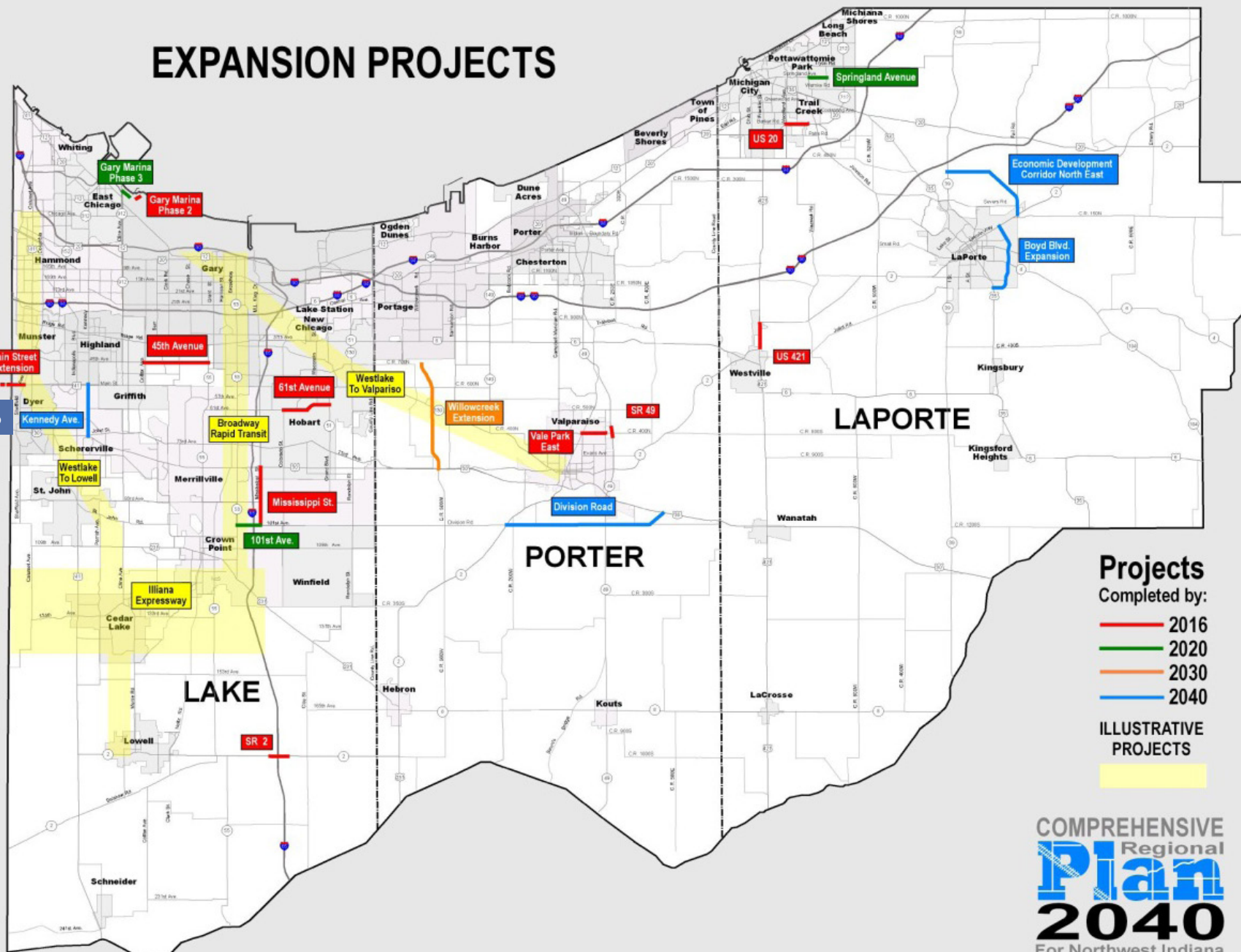
For the first time, the physically navigable water trails for canoes and kayaks in the region have been identified and mapped out in NIRPC's Greenways and Blueways Plan. It includes 16 new potential routes within the three-county region.

Prioritize Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School

As part of the Transportation Improvement Program and funding process, Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School will be a consideration in funding priorities for the benefit of system expansion and safety.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

EXPANSION PROJECTS





CAPACITY EXPANSION TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

In accordance with federal requirements, the CRP includes a fiscally-constrained list of all capacity expansion transportation projects planned for Northwest Indiana. New roads and highway interchanges, added travel lanes, new transit lines and new transit routes are categorized as capacity expansion. To ensure it is fiscally-constrained, the CRP contains estimates of future funding levels and includes only those projects for which sufficient funding has been identified.

The selection of these projects was accomplished in consultation and cooperation with local and regional stakeholders using criteria based on the CRP vision, goals and objectives. Eligible projects also had to meet two prerequisites: the project must be compatible with the adopted Complete Streets Policy, and it must be recommended by the Congestion Management Process. The full project selection criteria are listed in the full CRP.

The projects were segmented by completion date in order to test their air quality impacts and ensure compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

In addition to funded projects, the CRP includes an illustrative list of projects. This list contains major projects that have been proposed for Northwest Indiana, but do not have a committed funding source.

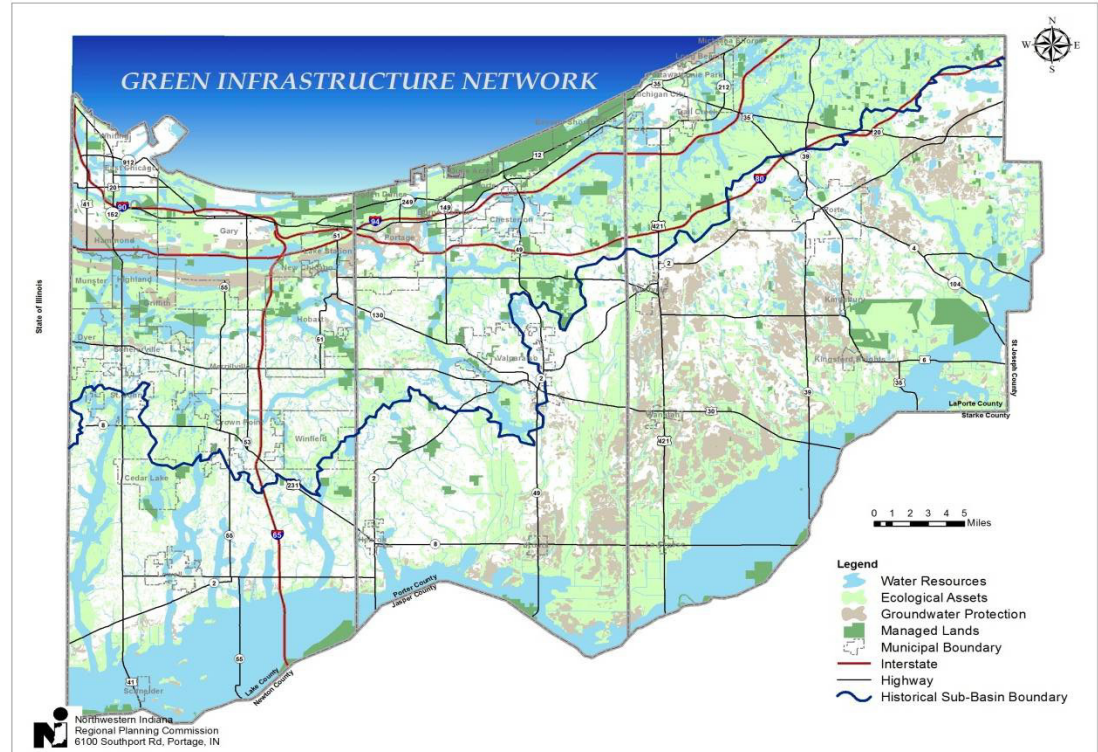
Projects Complete by 2016	
45th Avenue	Lake County
61st Avenue	Hobart
Mississippi Street	Merrillville
Gary Marina Access Phase 2a segment 3	Gary
Vale Park East	Valparaiso
Main Street Extension	Munster/Cook County, IL
SR-2 at I-65	INDOT
US-421 from SR-2 to SR-2	INDOT
SR-49 at CR-400N	INDOT
US-20 Center Turn Lane	INDOT
SR-912 over Indiana Harbor Canal	INDOT
Projects Complete by 2020	
Gary Marina Access Phase 3	Gary
Springland Avenue	Michigan City
101st Avenue	Merrillville
Projects Complete by 2030	
Willowcreek Extension	Porter County
Projects Complete by 2040	
Kennedy Avenue	Schererville
Boyd Boulevard Expansion	LaPorte
Division Road	Valparaiso
Economic Development Corridor NE	LaPorte
Illustrative List of Projects	
Projects that are not included in the fiscally-constrained conforming plan:	
Broadway Rapid Transit	GPTC/Sierra Club
Westlake Commuter Lines	NICTD
Illiana Expressway	INDOT



Chapter III: Environment and Green Infrastructure

OUR GOALS:

- MANAGED GROWTH THAT PROTECTS FARMLAND, ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS AND IMPORTANT ECOSYSTEMS
- REDUCED FLOODING RISKS AND IMPROVED WATER QUALITY
- IMPROVED AIR QUALITY
- CLEAN LAND



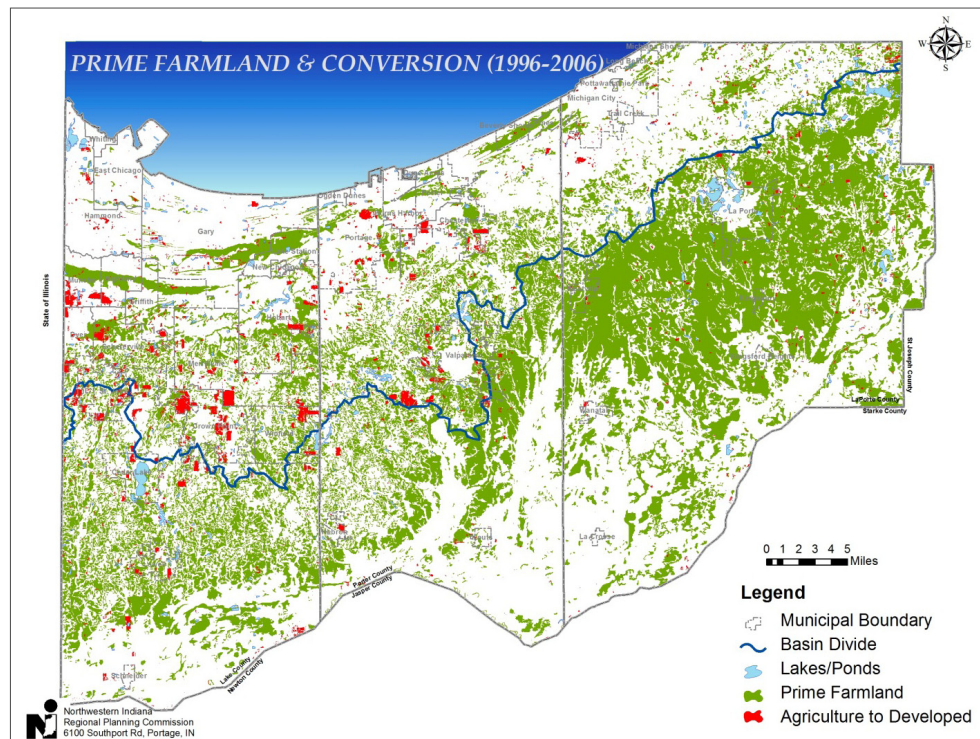
FACING REALITY / ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

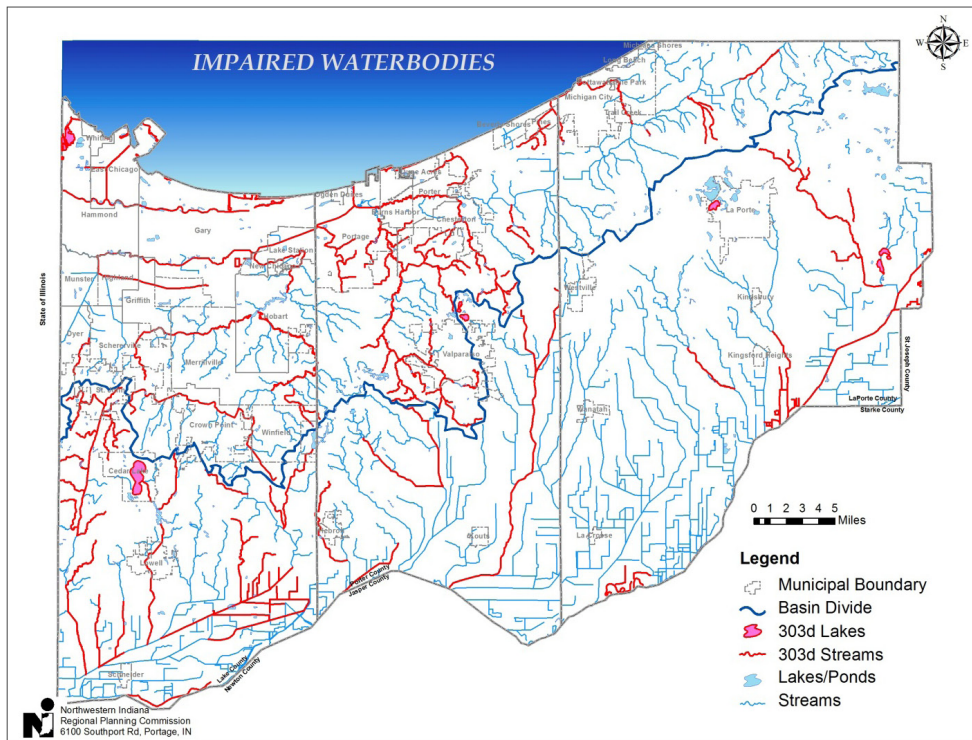
From the majestic Indiana Dunes to the banks of the Kankakee River, the ecological treasures of the region are some of our greatest assets.

The prime agricultural land, plentiful waterways and natural areas support the quality of life and economies of all of our communities. However, Northwest Indiana land consumption over the past 20 years from urban uses increased dramatically, whereas population change over the same period increased very little in comparison. Many of the region's agricultural areas, with limited public structures and service capacities for residents, have received this growth. This urban expansion has included development on high-quality forested and environmental-sensitive areas, particularly in Porter and LaPorte counties.

Our water resources play a vital, life-sustaining role in both the Lake Michigan and Kankakee River watersheds. Unconstrained growth will continue to adversely impact the quality of water resources we are dependent on in daily life.

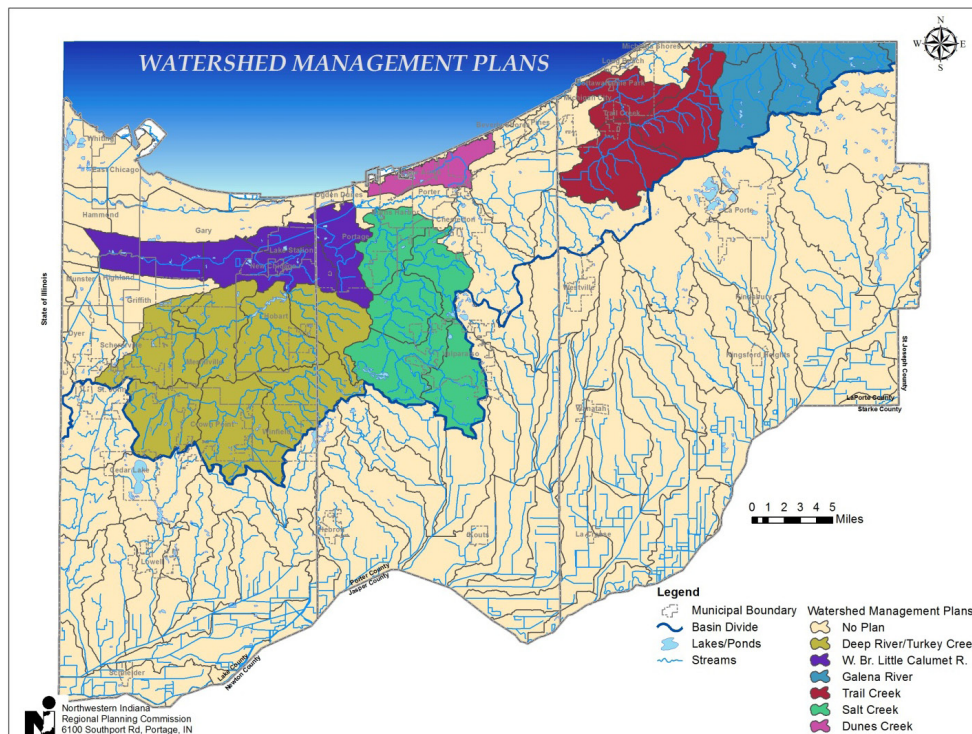
Unchecked growth also threatens our air quality by spreading out more vehicle congestion. With these complex challenges facing our region, it is critical that recommendations throughout the CRP act in concert to slow and reverse these trends.





Over the course of many decades, a number of our waterways have become impaired because of land-use decisions and practices with the unfortunate side effect of contributing to increased runoff volumes, usually loaded with pollutants.

Urban and agricultural runoff, failing septic systems and point source discharges from industry and sewage treatment plants - all contribute to poor water quality.



Helping to counter these impacts are new watershed management plans that aim to restore and protect our waterways by advocating practices that prevent or reduce polluted water runoff.

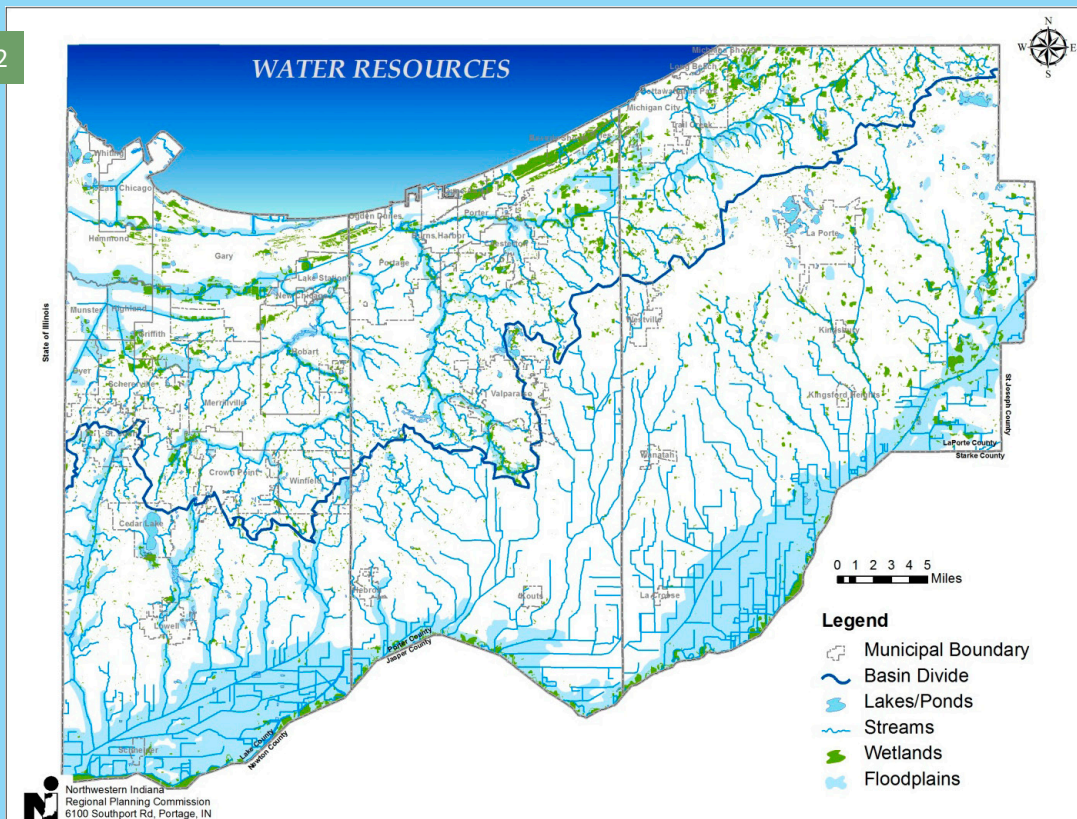
WATER RESOURCES AND CONSUMPTION

PROTECT OUR WATER RESOURCES

Adjacent to the largest reserve of fresh water supply in the world, Northwest Indiana thrives on the availability of water, and the vital role it plays in the economic, social and environmental well-being of our region. All aspects of our society depend heavily on this valuable resource. It provides us with drinking water, a robust ecosystem, a source of prime economic advantage, and an abundance of recreational opportunities. Our water resources flow from a wide variety of outlets, including a significant number of wetlands, lakes and streams throughout the region. Taken together an appreciation must be fostered for protection measures that conserve our water resources through sensitive development practices and increased conservation practices.

Lakes and Streams - The presence of Lake Michigan dominates our regional culture like no other natural resource. A unique mix of industrial, residential and recreational land uses permeates the coastline and takes full advantage of what the lake provides economically and socially. Inland there are more than 1,775 miles of streams and 500 lakes and ponds scattered across the Northwest Indiana landscape. Many of these waters are navigable for primarily recreational uses, with several having outstanding fishing value.

Wetlands - Predating its modern development, Northwest Indiana was teeming with wetlands. These vital natural areas serve us in many ways from floodwater storage to prime fish and wildlife habitat. Today, roughly a fifth of these wetlands remain, and they tend to be smaller and fragmented. A vast majority have been lost to draining for agricultural or development purposes. Even so, wetlands remain an integral part of our region, with an immense variety of plant and animal life. They continue to serve us by providing flood protection, improving water quality, and offering a myriad of recreational opportunities.



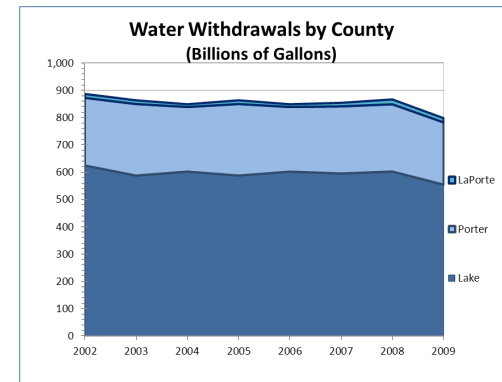
Water Withdrawal, Consumption and Supply

Floodplains - Often invisible, floodplains serve many valuable roles, including floodwater storage, water quality protection and groundwater recharge. Over time, much of the Lake Michigan watershed natural floodplains have been converted to residential, industrial and commercial uses. This has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars spent to rebuild structures damaged by floods and to construct levees and other flood control systems to protect them. Farmland also is affected by flooding in the Kankakee River Basin. The solution remains limited development in floodplains and restoration where opportunities arise.

Aquifers – Since groundwater supplies many of our rural residents with drinking water, it is imperative to keep these resources clear of contaminants. Nitrate and pesticides are some of the common threats, although aquifer sources remain largely clear of unsafe levels. Groundwater recharge and discharge rates need to be monitored to maintain healthy ecosystems, which in turn protect habitats for both wildlife and plants.

Our use of regional water supplies needs careful planning so as not to be overused, and thus impairing our quality of life. Within the past decade, water withdrawals have declined because of more efficient use of water in industry and overall conservation practices. The other end of the equation involves the amount of water returned to our streams, ditches and aquifers. Data shows industry and agriculture appear to consume the largest portion of water in our region, where industry returns more water back into the environment – after appropriate treatment.

On the public consumption end, the networks of supply systems are vast and have a tremendous impact on development. Water flows through pipelines that serve all land uses, and provide a valuable incentive for businesses and residents to locate. The supply systems range from municipal facilities to small private enterprises. The amount of water consumed varies greatly over the three counties, with excess capacity available because of the shifts in population from older urban areas to new developments. This capacity is not well distributed regionally and not located where the population is moving to. Over time, adoption of cost-effective water conservation and efficiency measures of our utilities are needed to reduce the need for costly capacity investments without restricting future growth.



Wastewater Treatment

As important as getting water to consumers, it is equally critical to safely and efficiently dispose of their sewage and wastewater. These public sewer facilities need to be properly planned for protecting our public health, and supporting desired development. In older communities in the region, “combined sewer systems,” which collect rainwater and sewage together, continue to present challenges. When they overflow, untreated wastewater flows into our rivers and streams. These systems are now in the process of being corrected to prevent and control these discharges. Another challenge in less urbanized areas includes the management and maintenance of private facilities and septic systems.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILD THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

Like “gray infrastructure” such as roads, sewers and power grids, “green infrastructure” is an invaluable element of a region.

Examples include managed networks of natural lands, parks, greenways and other open spaces that maintain natural ecological processes and improve our quality of life. The foundation of green infrastructure networks is their natural elements, such as forests, wetlands and rivers, which work together to sustain the natural environment and our people. Planning for these networks should be conducted at all geographic levels and include the following systems:

Regional Open Space

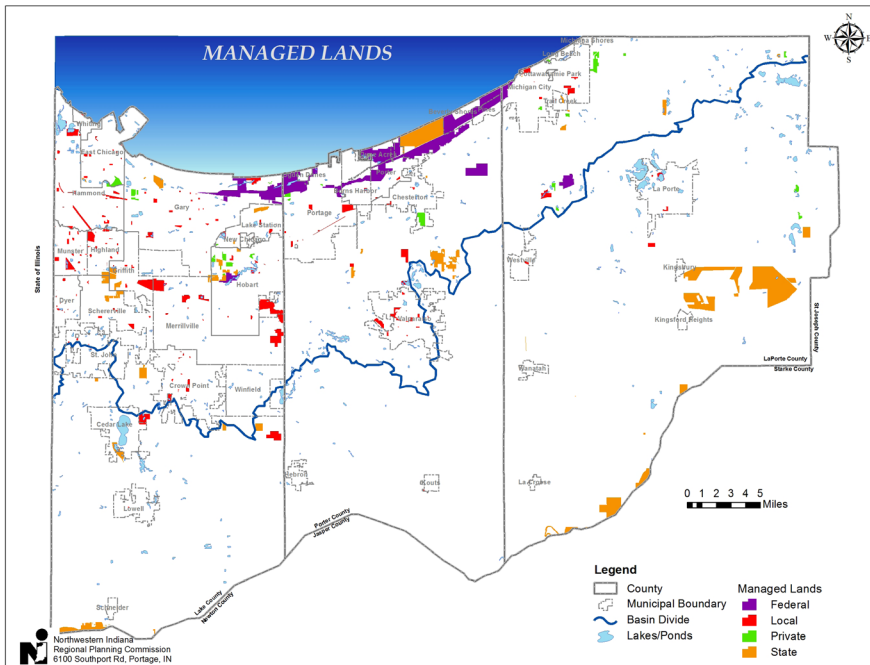
Northwest Indiana is renowned for its rich environmental diversity, thanks in large part to our proximity to Lake Michigan. The backbone of public and private open spaces forms the core of the region’s vast ecological diversity and provides opportunities for our enjoyment of these resources. There exist today approximately 315 natural or recreational areas within Northwest Indiana that are managed by a variety of government and private entities. Open spaces throughout our region include:

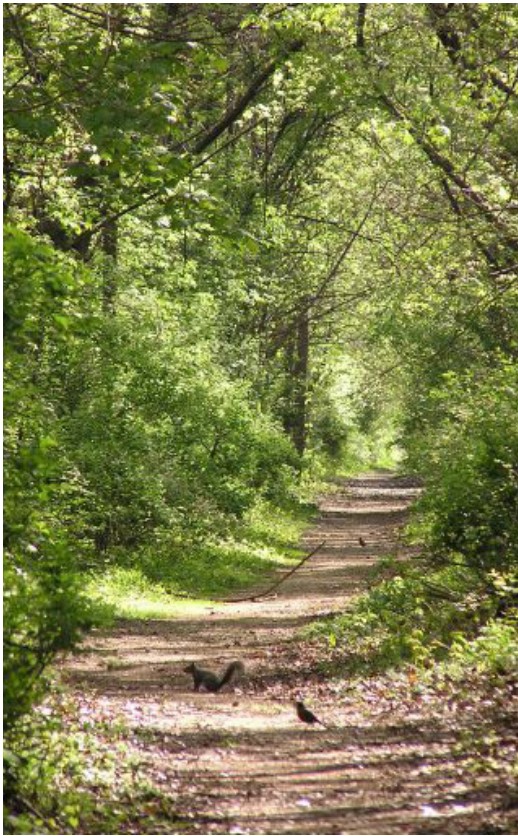
Greenways - Lineal corridors of open space, either water- or land-based, that provide recreational opportunities and protect natural ecosystems.

Active Open Space - These include playing fields for team sports and playgrounds and are largely government owned and managed.

Passive Open Space - Found primarily in unincorporated areas of the region that involve hiking trails and large tracts of land set aside for conservation purposes.

There are many needs for increased open space identified in the CRP. There are hundreds of acres of land brimming with a variety of native plants and high-quality habitat remnants. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources recently performed an analysis that documented open space access deficiencies in the Lake Michigan watershed, and the 2010 Ped and Pedal Plan outlines a series of prime corridors for future trail development. A number of waterways also have been identified for increased recreational use.





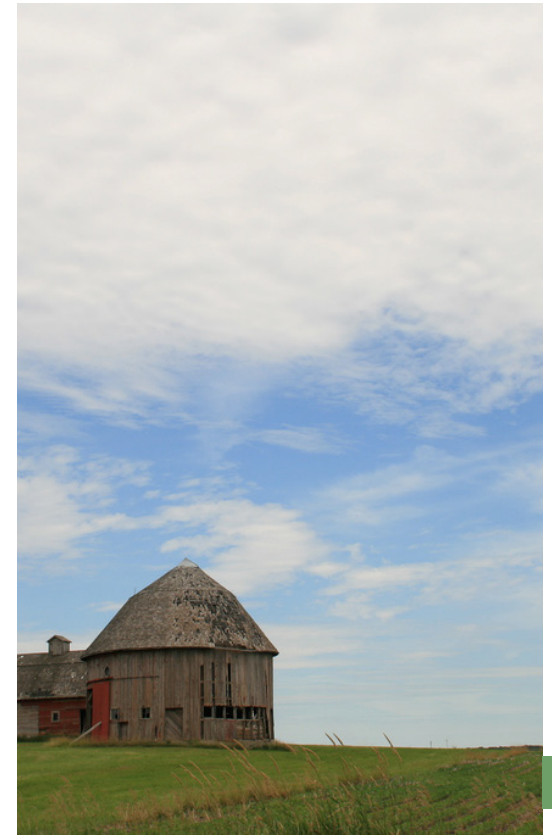
Forestlands

An appreciation of the value of forestlands is evident across the globe. Forests provide a host of benefits, from habitats for wildlife, to clean air and water, to providing a solid aesthetic value for a community. However, over the years, the number of forested acres has decreased dramatically in Northwest Indiana, first by agricultural practices, and recently by development pressures. There are also threats from poor tree quality and damaging insects. Proactive protection policies, enacted most especially at the local level, will be necessary to curb further deterioration of our regional forests.



Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat

No other region in the Midwest has been as greatly impacted by human activity as Northwest Indiana. A tremendous variety of native plant and wildlife species used to call our region home. These included pine-covered dunes, marshland habitats by the Calumet and Kankakee rivers, and Oak-Savannah and tall grass prairies. Today, remnants of these systems are prevalent at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and in scattered pockets of open space. However, even these are threatened from outside stresses, where additional protection policies are necessary to retain and expand upon their value to the region.



Prime Agricultural Land

Agricultural and rural lands are key components in a successful green infrastructure network, preserving natural and aesthetic qualities and enhancing rural community character and well-being.

There are approximately 530 square miles of prime farmland in our region, and today an appreciation of their preservation value is emerging in our society.

AIR QUALITY

IMPROVE OUR AIR

Clean air is vital to the productivity of people, land and businesses in Northwest Indiana. Poor air quality can cause a myriad of health problems such as heart disease and asthma. Our region has struggled with maintaining healthy air standards because of our industrial legacy and abundance of vehicular traffic. **Over the years, our air quality has improved dramatically because of significant investments by local industries and vehicle manufacturers to reduce pollution to comply with federal and state regulations.**

Continued progress is necessary, however, over a broad spectrum of source contributors. Specifically as the bigger manufacturers reduce their emissions, the importance of the impacts caused by individuals becomes greater.

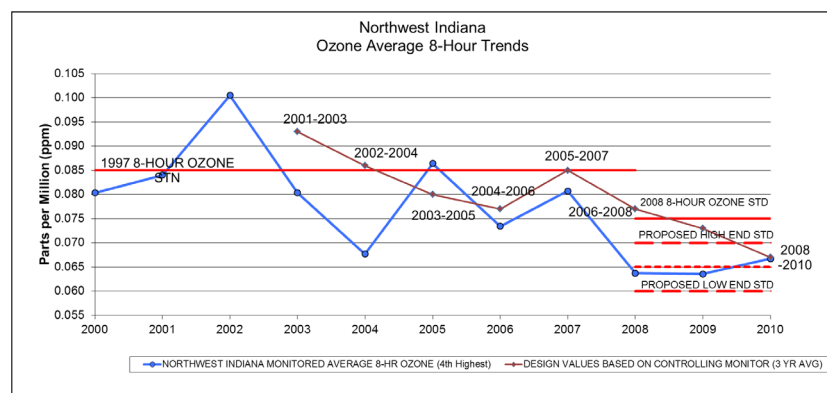
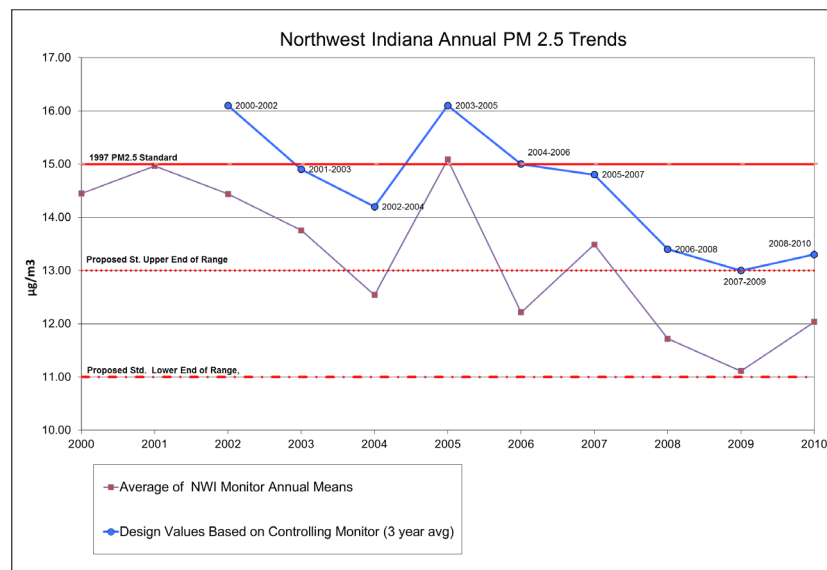
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National Ambient Air Quality Standards

The federal government established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) as the primary tool to measure the amount of six critical air pollutants that are detrimental to human health. Northwest Indiana has achieved “attainment,” or success in each of these six areas, with the latest involving fine particulate matter (2009) and ozone (2010). While this is a cause for celebration for our region, it is important that we maintain and continue to strive for improvement in air quality.

Air Toxics

Toxics are monitored and regulated differently than NAAQS pollutants. These are divided into two major groups – carcinogenic and noncarcinogenic. Both of these are measured at five air toxic monitoring sites throughout the



region operated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Predictably, these toxics are most prevalent in urbanized areas.

Regional Air Quality Programs

Transportation use, by nature, puts an enormous strain on our environmental quality. Petroleum-based vehicles cause widespread air pollution, which greatly increase a number of health problems for our residents. The Air Quality Programs currently implemented by NIRPC and local partner agencies

focus primarily on these transportation sources. Other sources, such as industrial air emissions, are regulated or managed by IDEM, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and, sometimes, local health departments. The following details these efforts.

AIR QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH –

NIRPC uses federal funding sources to promote a wide variety of activities and events encouraging clean air actions. The program is called It Adds Up to Cleaner Air, which reminds residents of a number of steps they can employ to improve air quality. Other important regional programs include Partners for Clean Air and South Shore Clean Cities. NIRPC's Gas Can Exchange program is one of the most successful outreach programs today.

VEHICLE EMISSIONS TESTING, INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE –

Cars and light-duty trucks can contribute significantly to ozone, and produce air toxins and particulates harmful to our health. To aid in air quality improvement, IDEM requires emission testing of these vehicles in Lake and Porter counties. Continued testing will be required to prevent backsliding and to maintain our progress.

DIESEL EMISSIONS REDUCTION PROGRAMS –

Apart from automobiles, pollution from diesel engines is a significant concern in Northwest Indiana. The familiar black soot from buses and trucks contaminate our air and is a detriment to public health. However, diesel engines are a durable and economical source of power and are important to our economic livelihoods. A balance is necessary; and a number of programs and projects are moving forward to reduce diesel emissions in sensible ways.

IDLE REDUCTION –

A significant strategy in reducing air pollution involves a number of technologies that lessen vehicle idling time. This strategy can provide a number of benefits toward dramatically reducing emissions of pollutants, reducing noise pollution and improving engine life. Behavioral change is also a method to achieve idle reduction.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS –

Americans are becoming increasingly concerned about the condition of our nation's air quality and our dependence on foreign oil. The good news is that alternative fuels are readily available. Alternative-fuel vehicles (AFVs) are becoming more prevalent and are configured to accept a variety of fuel mixes to aid in efficiency. The major alternative fuels now in use are ethanol, biodiesel, natural gas, propane/liquefied petroleum gas and ultra-low sulfur diesel.

BROWNFIELDS

CLEAN UP BROWNFIELDS

Over the years, pollution-creating industries and businesses have taken a toll on our environment in Northwest Indiana. When they depart from a location, they leave behind a potentially contaminated footprint and thus create a “brownfield.” These sites vary in the level of pollution present, and there are a number of cleanup, or remediation, standards that govern these programs. Some sites may involve only minor remediation, and costs are minimized and new uses initiated. Other sites can be classified as full-blown “Superfund” sites by the EPA, which indicate the worst hazardous waste sites in the U.S. Superfund sites pose an enormous challenge for remediation, and they are primarily located in low-income, urbanized areas. Even the sites that are not contaminated gain a brownfield “stigma” by mere proximity to others. The existence of these sites not only hampers a community’s economic outlook, it also severely affects its overall well-being.

It is critical to promote programs that aid in the remediation of brownfield sites to protect our environmental and economic health.

Many sites in our region today have been successfully cleaned up and restored back to productive use, however many more locations remain. A number of programs exist to help restore brownfields and address the array of complex issues that are associated with these processes. These programs exist on the state and federal level and will need to be employed vigorously in order to revitalize our region for future infill growth in our established urban areas.

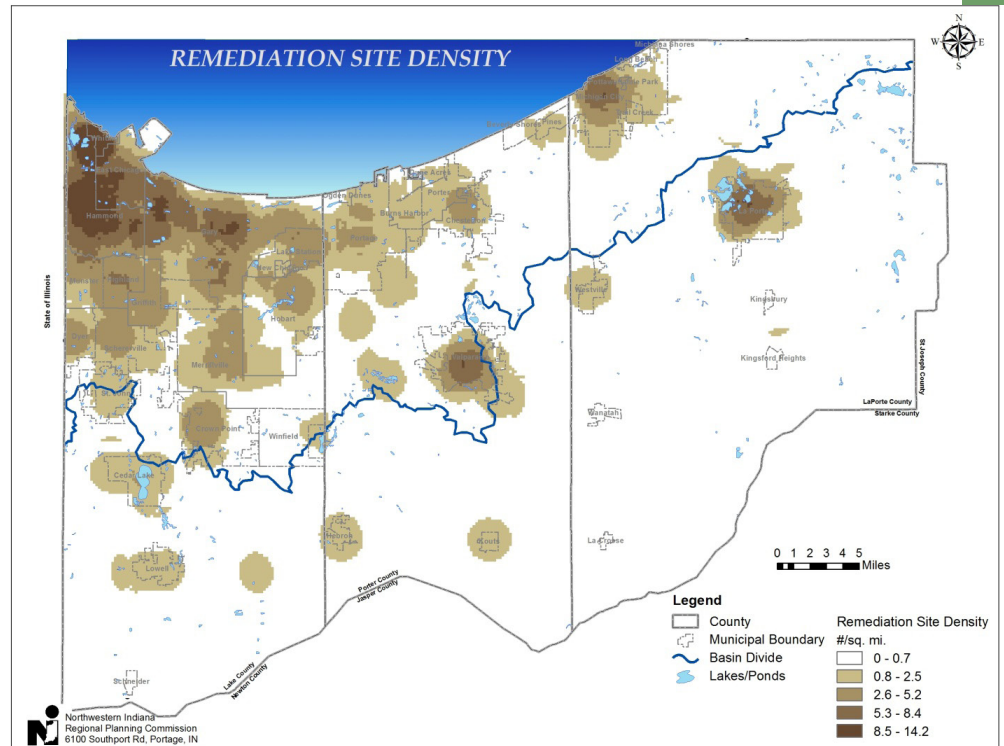




Brownfield Remediation:

The site of the Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk (above) formerly was used by a steel corporation as settling ponds for industrial byproduct and a sewage treatment facility. Through an innovative partnership among the City of Portage, the National Park Service, the Regional Development Authority, U.S. Steel and others, the property was restored and returned to public use.

Opportunities for brownfield restoration exist throughout Northwest Indiana, but our Focused Revitalization areas hold the greatest potential.



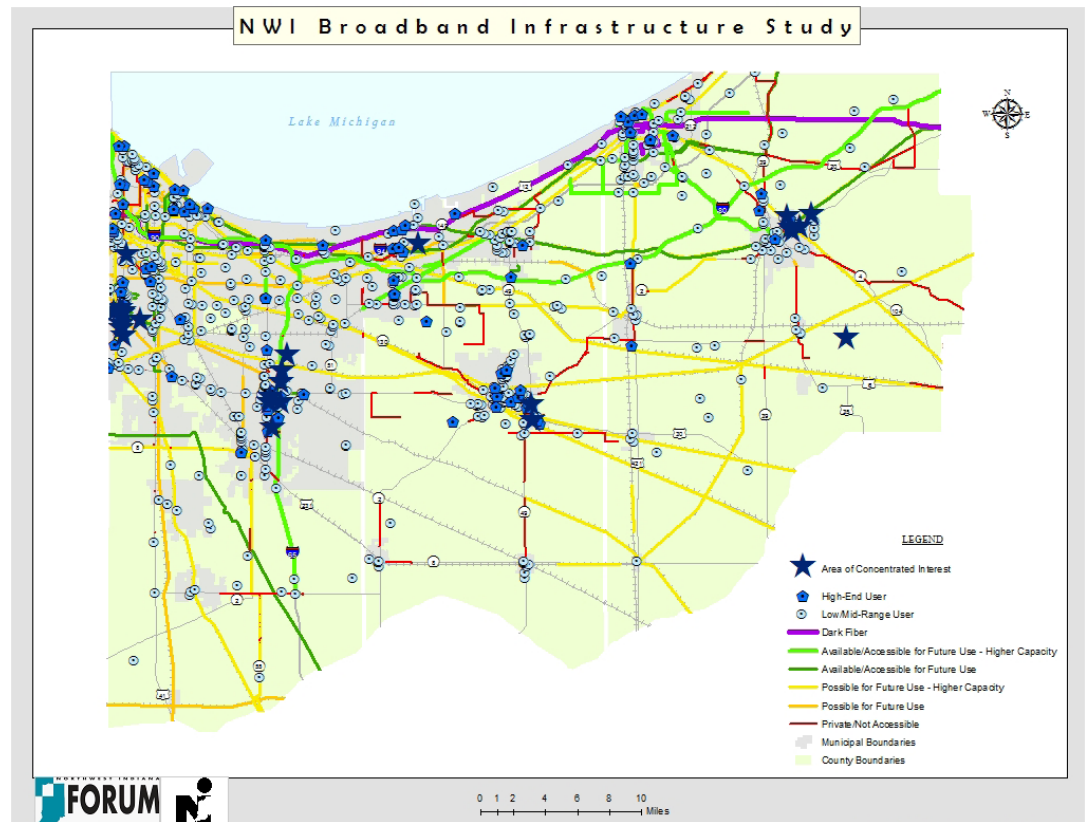




Chapter IV: Human and Economic Resources

OUR GOALS:

- A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE, DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY THAT PROTECTS AND ENHANCES OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- EXPANDED ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



Gary South Shore RailCats game at the U.S. Steel Yard, Gary

FACING REALITY / HUMAN AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

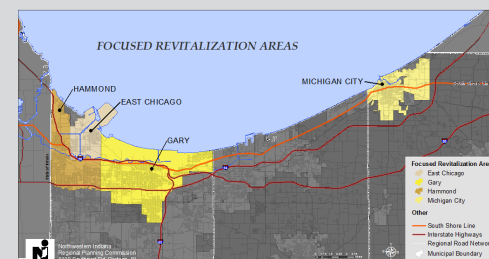
A core indicator of a vibrant region is the health of its economic sector.

Northwest Indiana competes in the Midwest, the nation and the world to attract business, industry and economic development opportunities.

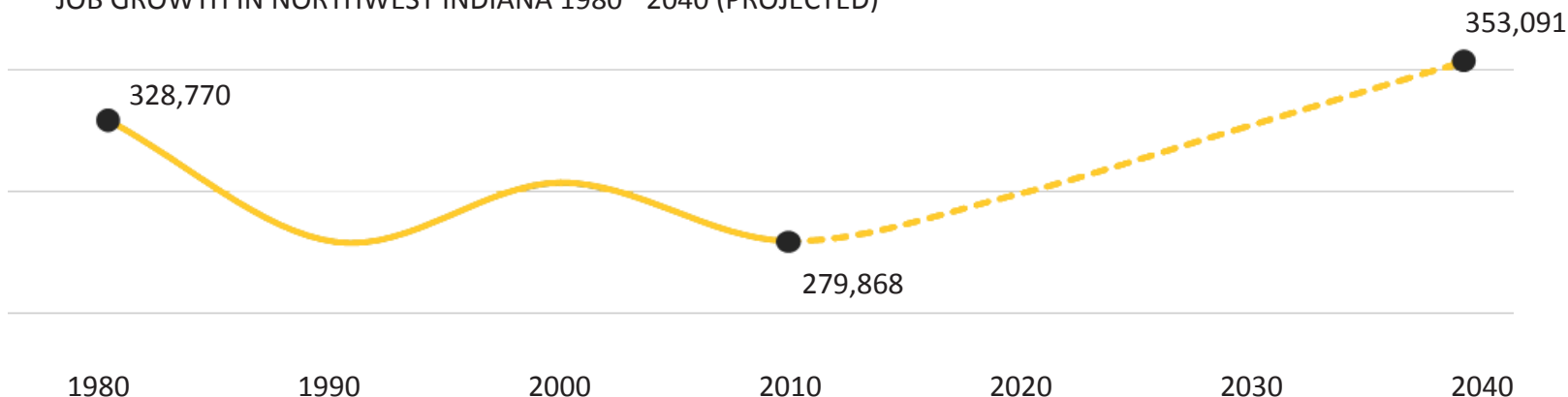
A number of quality education institutions are in place to train our work force for the challenges of the 21st century. As our economy continues to move away from a manufacturing and goods economy to a services and professional economy, Northwest Indiana must adapt to these changing factors and position ourselves successfully to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

Economic revitalization is dependent on Northwest Indiana's business, government and institutions working together to improve work force skills, develop desired infrastructure and create reinvestment opportunities in the region's core communities. Major partners facilitating progress include the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District and the Northwest Indiana Forum. Taken together, a strong economic framework is in place, and the challenge to the region will be to assemble the necessary resources for growth and success.

The 2040 CRP places emphasis on reinvestment and redevelopment of the region's core communities, particularly focusing on Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City. Support for the economic health and vitality for the region's core communities was an important theme throughout the planning process.

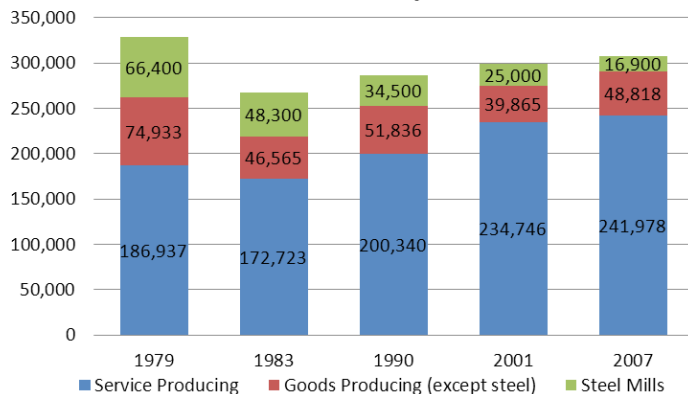


JOB GROWTH IN NORTHWEST INDIANA 1980 - 2040 (PROJECTED)





**Northwest Indiana's Transforming Economy,
Number of Jobs by Sector**

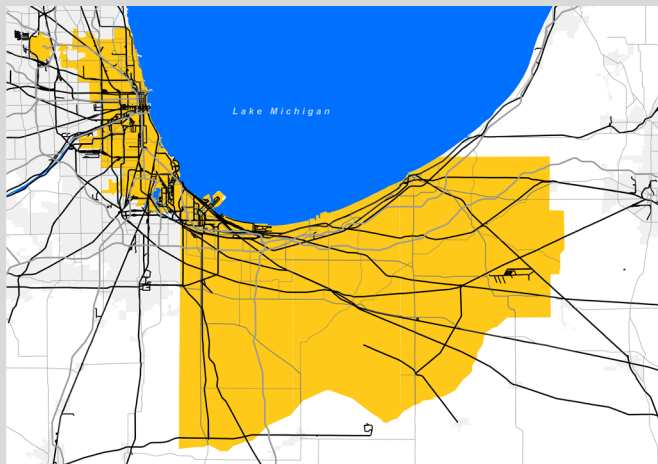


CURRENT CONDITIONS AND NEEDS

To properly analyze our economic conditions and outlook, we must understand the economic “base” of Northwest Indiana. For more than 100 years, our region has been a prime location for manufacturing, and this economic legacy has afforded our residents a solid quality of life and security. Over the years, however, this sector has lost ground to other areas such as government, health care and retail tourism. Even so, manufacturing continues to be the leading sector in our regional economy in terms of jobs. The challenge for our future resides in our region’s ability to balance these jobs with those required to compete in an ever-changing global economy.

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Northwest Indiana's position as the eastern gateway to the global city of Chicago and our historic role as a transportation and freight corridor offer an abundance of possibilities to expand our quality job base.



Economic Trends and Employment

Historically, much of the economy of Northwest Indiana was built on the steel industry. Although a leader for much of the last century, restructuring in the industry has meant fewer jobs, reduced tax revenue and environmental cleanup challenges. The loss of jobs in a once-dominant industry corresponded with a rise in those living below the poverty level, with Lake County having a rate well above the national average. Our region needs to continue to position itself as prime location for economic development opportunities that provide for the creation and retention of quality jobs.

Job creation itself is difficult to predict. Many factors influence job growth in an area, such as governmental policies and civic amenities. Taken together, Northwest Indiana has plenty of reasons to be optimistic about future job growth.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

ADVANCE OUR TOP INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

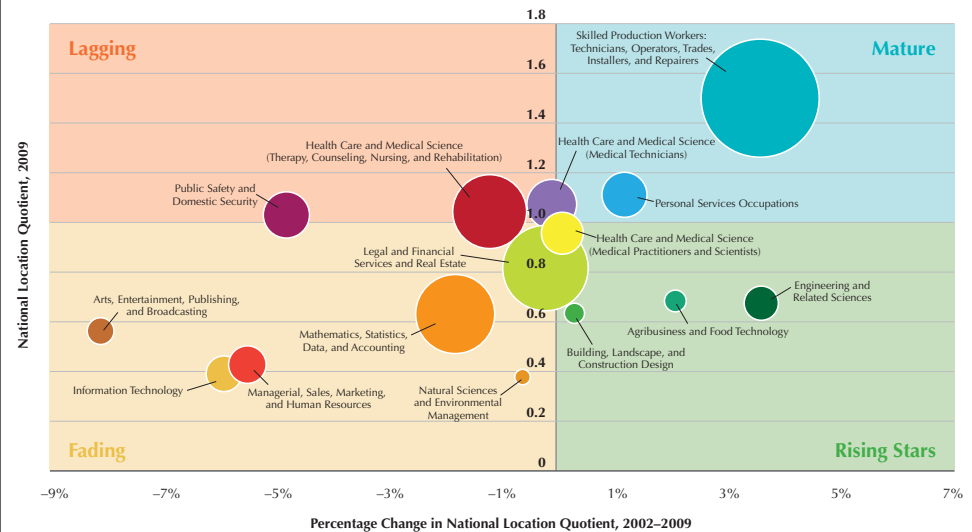
In order to properly gauge how our economy can compete, an evaluation of our economic “clusters” is necessary. These clusters are types of economic specializations that in combination offer a competitive advantage in the marketplaces. A number of potential clusters have emerged in Northwest Indiana. They include:

- *Transportation, Distribution and Logistics*
- *Advanced Manufacturing*
- *IT/Technology*
- *Professional and Medical Services*

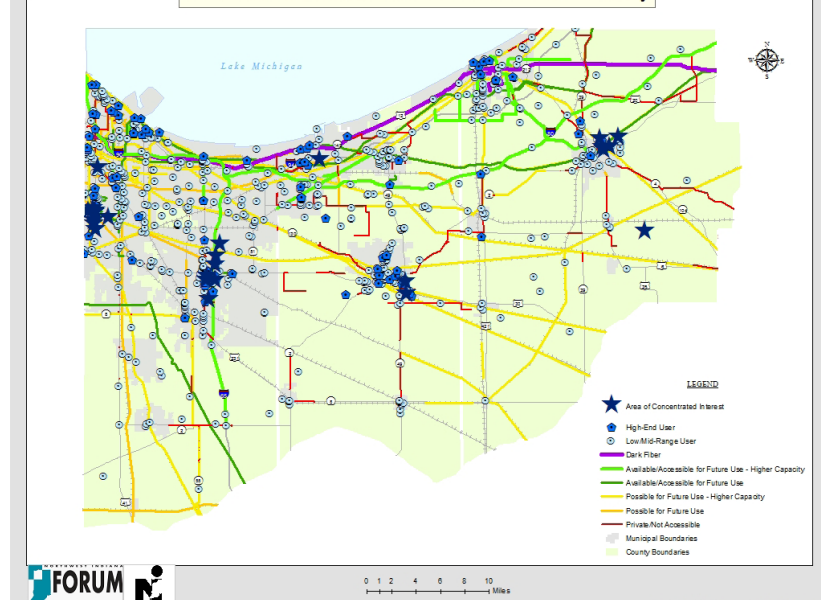
Note: The size of each bubble is based on the number of workers within each occupation cluster

Source: Center for Workforce Innovations
Northwest Indiana 2010 State of the Workforce Report.

Change in Occupational Cluster Concentration in Northwest Indiana, 2002–2009



NWI Broadband Infrastructure Study



Map by NRP-C. Fiber data provided by Comcast Inc.



LEVERAGE LAND USE & MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

NIRPC's regional role in transportation, environmental and land use resource guidance means it is well positioned to continue to attract state and federal resources that can be leveraged in the interest of economic development.

Capitalize on freight assets

Northwest Indiana lies at the center of a global multimodal freight network. This keeps business costs low and consumer prices down. The movement, handling and storing of freight also generates significant employment. Capitalizing on our infrastructure advantages to create economic opportunities is a key strategy for revitalizing Northwest Indiana.

Assess economic impacts of planning

NIRPC should routinely assess and identify economic impacts of its transportation planning process and selection of projects.

Provide land assembly assistance

NIRPC will continue to partner with the Northwest Indiana Forum to create a stronger understanding of the value of land assembly in the region. Both agencies will work together to develop educational seminars and programs.

SUPPORT THE NWI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

The NWI Economic Development District (NWIEDD) is a partnership between NIRPC and the Forum that is becoming a central avenue responsible for regional economic development. The NWIEDD serves as a state coordinator and clearinghouse for regional economic development grant requests. With NIRPC's input and support, the district is responsible for the preparation and upkeep of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document.

NIRPC will continue to provide planning and programming of infrastructure for economic development and supply assistance and support to the NWIEDD.



SUPPORT EDUCATION & JOB DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

A vibrant region means our economy is thriving and our people are well educated, and a well-educated population calls for expanded access to knowledge and opportunities. Unfortunately many of our schools, especially in our older urban areas, suffer from poor results, low graduation rates and unequal funding. Many have commented that our region is undereducated and underprepared for jobs.

The availability of an educated work force is a major factor that firms review as they seek to relocate to a particular region. Our institutions of education must improve to help us compete for quality jobs that sustain our region and quality of life. We boast several colleges and universities that aid in our competitiveness, but without quality jobs available for graduates, our region will continue to experience the "brain drain" that hampers our ability to succeed.

While education in and of itself is not a core function of NIRPC's mission, NIRPC will continue to support and partner with other agencies that focus on improved scholastic performance in Northwest Indiana.



FACING REALITY / STEWARDSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Land use decisions clearly remain the responsibility of local government. Yet local plans, codes and regulations are essential tools for accomplishing the regional vision outlined in the Comprehensive Regional Plan.

The CRP is intended to serve as advice and support for local plans and a means to accomplish regionally beneficial planning decisions. NIRPC will offer technical assistance for local entities, which will be dependent on community needs and means. NIRPC, as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and council of governments, is uniquely positioned to guide regional decision-making toward realizing the vision set forth in the CRP.

As appropriate, NIRPC will continue to take the lead on the following roles of regional governance and stewardship:

- **Planning, Reviewing and Coordination –**
NIRPC can serve an important role in reviewing and/or supporting local planning initiatives.
- **Funding and Finance Support –**
NIRPC allocates federal and state funding and can coordinate efforts to provide shared services and cooperative programs.
- **Advocacy and Environmental Justice –**
NIRPC will partner with established urban stakeholder groups to address an equitable distribution of funding and to promote effective policies.
- **Education and Communication –**
NIRPC can take the lead in facilitating and promoting policies to public and private groups on a wide range of progressive planning efforts.

NIRPC CRP IMPLEMENTATION

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy Committee
Land Use Committee*
Ped, Pedal and Paddle Subcommittee
CM/ITS Subcommittee
Transit Operators
TIP Workgroups
Interagency Consultation Group
Regional Bus Authority
NICTD
INDOT
Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission
FHWA
FTA

ENVIRONMENT /OPEN SPACE

Environmental Management Policy Committee
Air Quality Steering Committee
Watershed Management Advisory Committee
MS4 Community Partnership
Air Quality Steering Committee
Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission
Kankakee River Basin Commission
Save the Dunes Council
Wildlife Habitat Council
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
Sierra Club
Clean Cities
U.S. EPA

HUMAN / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Northwest Indiana Economic Development District
Regional Development Authority
Indiana Workforce One
Universities
U.S. EPA

GROWTH / CONSERVATION

Land Use Committee*
Greater Northwest Indiana Associates of Realtors

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Race Relations Council
Quality of Life Council
Urban League
Northwest Indiana Federation

LEGISLATIVE

NIRPC Legislative Committee
Indiana Association of Cities and Towns
Association of Indiana Counties
Regional Mayors Roundtable
Council of Towns and Smaller Cities

Legend:

NIRPC Committee

Partner-Tech Support

Partner-Policy, Advocacy

Partner-Funding

*This committee or agency addresses more than one Vision Theme

Note: Other NIRPC Committees include Local Government Assistance, Finance and Personnel and Homeland Security

CURRENT STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGES

CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships, both existing and new, represent the foundation of regional cooperation and sound stewardship of our resources. Governments in Northwest Indiana largely have remained fractured with multiple units providing services. A strong voice has emerged from region residents who desire more cooperation between municipal units of government, which in turn will help us achieve cost savings, improved social justice and effective land management.

These partnerships are harnessed through a variety of standing committees and entities that interact with NIRPC on a regular basis. All regional decision-making stakeholders play a particular role in each of these committees. The following outlines the committee and entity structures in relation to the CRP vision:

Partners in Growth and Conservation

Land Use Committee (NIRPC)
Local Governments

Partners in Transportation

Transportation Policy Committee (NIRPC)
Ped, Pedal and Paddle Subcommittee (NIRPC)
Regional Bus Authority
Northwest Indiana Commuter Transportation District
Indiana Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration

Partners in Environment/Open Space

Environmental Management Policy Committee (NIRPC)
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
South Shore Clean Cities
Northwest Indiana Forum
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Little Calumet River Basin Development and Kankakee River Basin Commission
Environmental Organizations (nonprofits)
Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
IL-IN Sea Grant
Industries

Partners in Human/Economic Development Resources

Northwest Indiana Forum
Northwest Indiana Economic Development District
Indiana Economic Development Corp.
Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center
Regional Development Company
Construction Advancement Foundation
Northwest Indiana Workforce Board
Office of Community and Rural Affairs

Partners in Legislative Advocacy

Legislative Policy Advisory Committee (NIRPC)
Council of Towns and Smaller Cities (NIRPC)
Regional Mayors Roundtable (NIRPC)
Indiana Association of Cities and Towns
Association of Indiana Counties
American Planning Association – Indiana Chapter

Partners in Environmental Justice

Race Relations Council
Northwest Indiana Urban League
Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council Inc.
Northwest Indiana Federation

CURRENT INITIATIVES

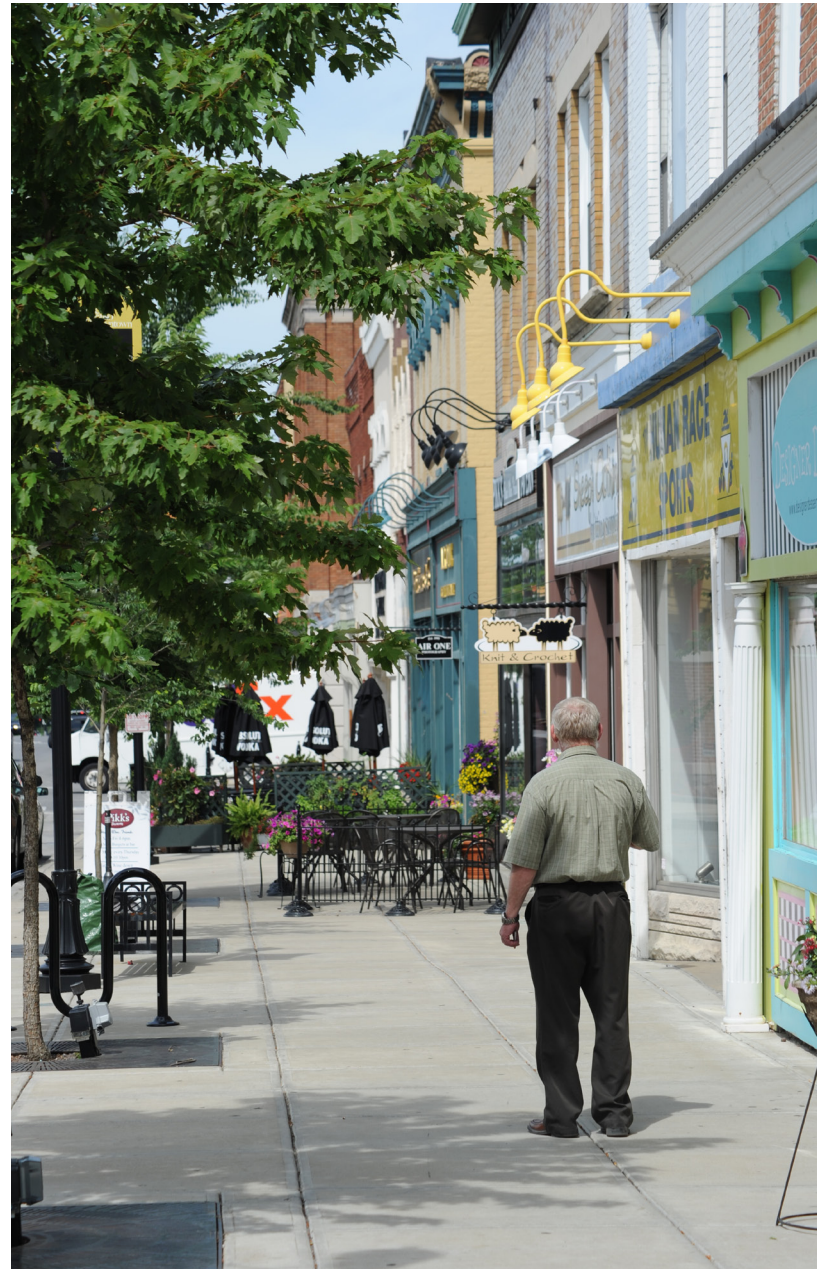
A number of current and ongoing activities are active in the region encouraging coordination, the practice of collaboration and the facilitation of stakeholders. NIRPC supports these efforts in a number of ways. These include study circles focused on race relations, shared service and funding assistance, cooperative agreements, information sharing and the staffing of the Local Government Assistance Advisory Committee.

Fostering New Partnerships and Initiatives

Building on established relationships, NIRPC should foster new forms of cooperation. There are a number of untapped partnerships that are ripe with opportunities. They include:

- *Colleges and Universities* – resources can be shared where NIRPC lacks staff support
- *Developers* – promoting sustainable practices with the help of municipal governments
- *Social/Environmental Justice Partners* – these must be integrated into regional policy

Several key initiatives also could be undertaken by NIRPC that would further help governmental efficiency and promote dialogue between decision-makers. These include a regular convening of local officials in Northwest Indiana, establishing task forces addressing important policy areas, working across state lines with our neighboring entities and participating in ongoing regional initiatives.



Downtown Valparaiso

CURRENT STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGES

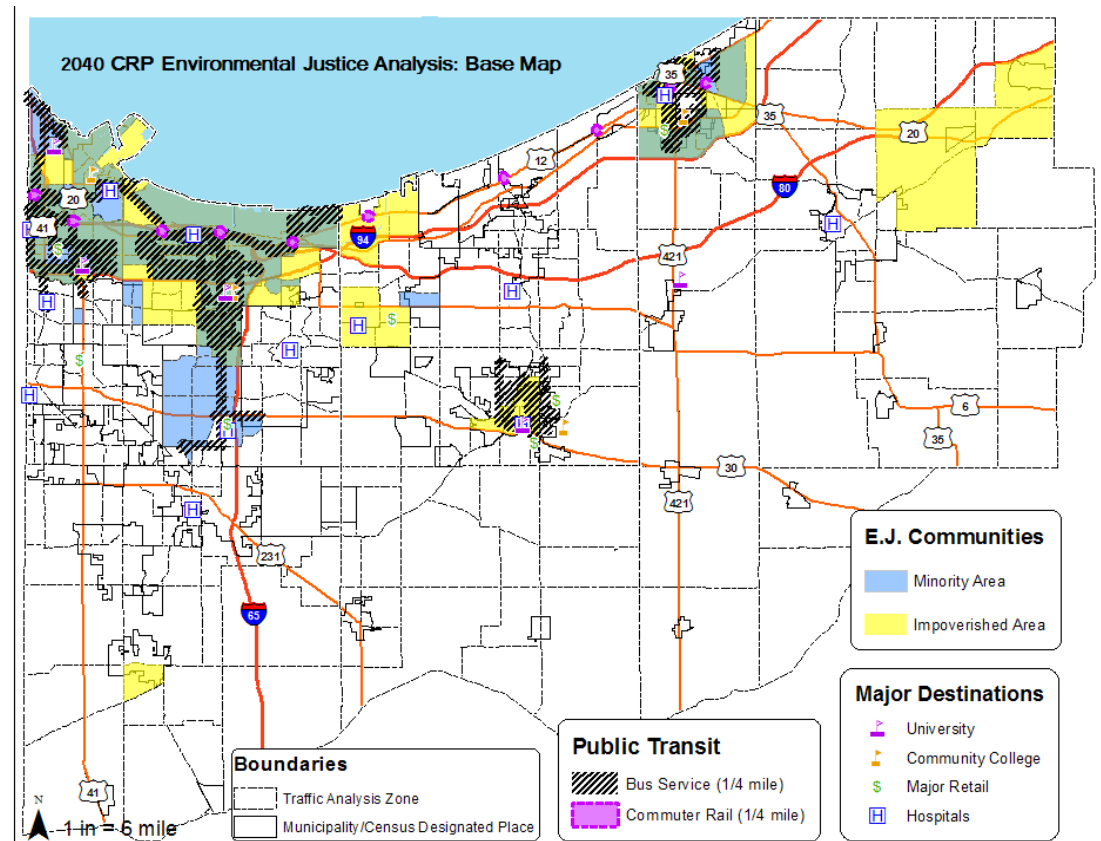
A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Since 1994, every federal agency has been directed to make “environmental justice” (EJ) part of its mission by addressing the effects of all programs, policies and activities on “minority populations and low-income populations.” The goal is to provide these populations with greater opportunity for public participation by promoting nondiscrimination in federal programs.

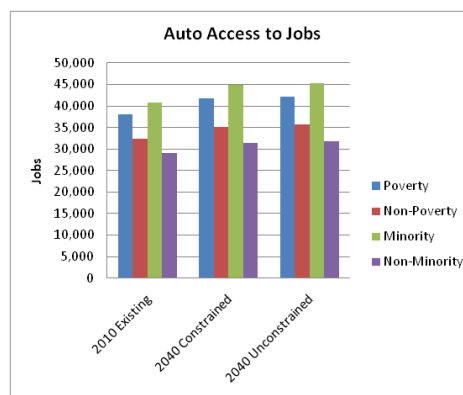
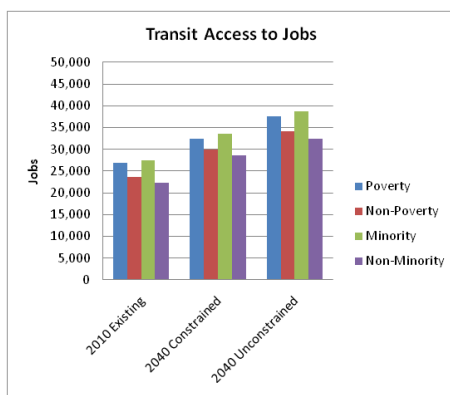
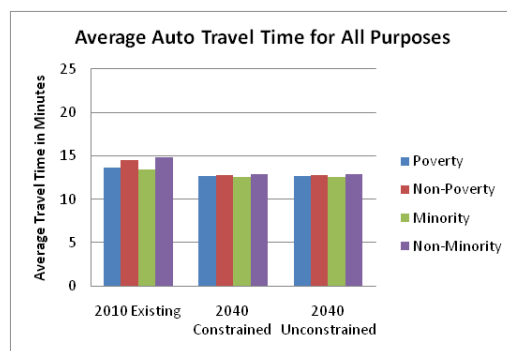
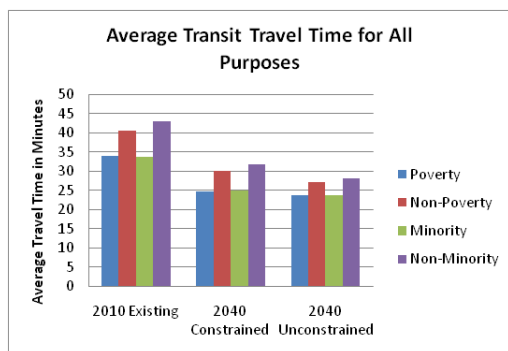
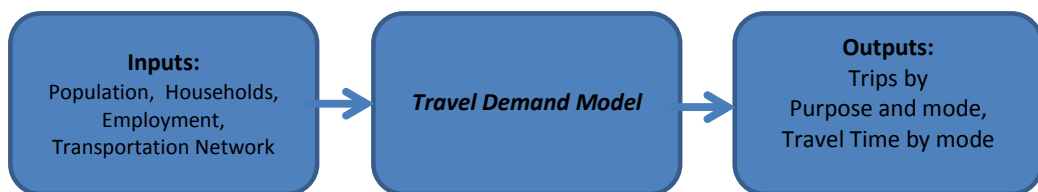
NIRPC has an obligation to fulfill EJ requirements through its transportation activities. This commitment translates on reducing regional patterns of inequity over time and supporting revitalization efforts in areas of economic challenge.

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NIRPC developed the Environmental Justice Base Map to identify the areas in Northwest Indiana with higher than average concentrations of minority and low-income populations and to analyze the impacts of the 2040 CRP.



2040 CRP ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACTS



Implementation of the 2040 CRP framework of Livable Centers, with an urban strategy of supporting core communities, will ensure access to opportunity for minority and low-income people and the maximum benefit of public expenditures.

In these charts, the category labeled 2010 Existing refers to current conditions, the category labeled 2040 Constrained refers to the conditions in Northwest Indiana in the year 2040 if the CRP-funded transportation projects are built and the category labeled 2040 Unconstrained refers to the conditions in the year 2040 if both the CRP-funded and the unfunded, illustrative projects listed in the plan are implemented.





Chapter VI:

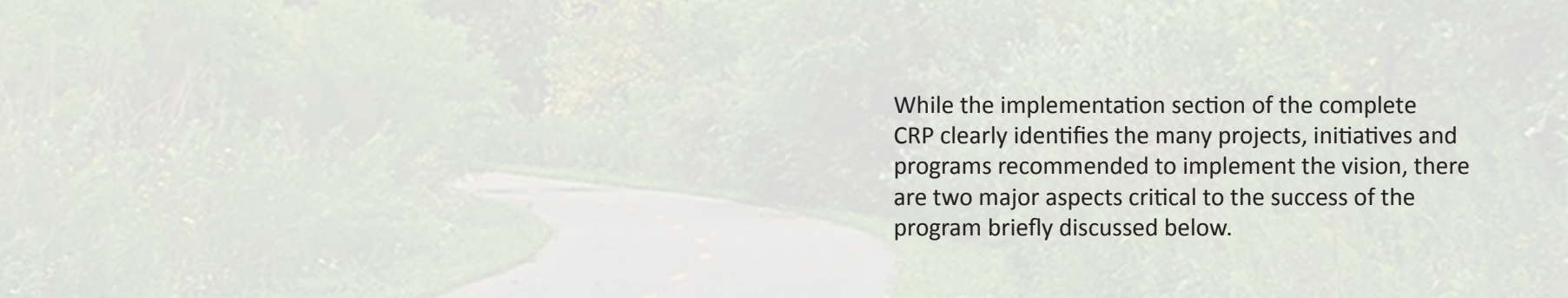
Implementation

A Pathway to Success

IMPLEMENTATION / A PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

As described briefly in the beginning of this summary, NIRPC's role in Northwest Indiana has changed dramatically. There has been a clear call by the residents and stakeholders of Northwest Indiana to improve the quality of life in ways only an organization such as NIRPC is uniquely positioned to do. This summary plan has offered insights to the many projects and initiatives identified in the complete Comprehensive Regional Plan.





While the implementation section of the complete CRP clearly identifies the many projects, initiatives and programs recommended to implement the vision, there are two major aspects critical to the success of the program briefly discussed below.

NIRPC AS A FULL-SERVICE REGIONAL AGENCY

The CRP calls for NIRPC to become involved in a range of implementation activities such as Livable Centers, a regional vision for transit, core community revitalization, regional planning and implementation, education and many others.

These roles could be quite varied from project lead to a coordinating or supporting role. The fact is execution of the CRP will require expanding NIRPC's role. This is a positive outcome for Northwest Indiana.

Stronger working relationships with all its partners and deeper insights into regional issues and opportunities will enable NIRPC to effectively respond to needs and accomplish its goals. These working relationships will help better identify priorities, give timely access to resources, and coordination with state, federal and other agencies. Solid working relationships also will develop trust, mutual support for common goals and interests, and success.

We know this will take time, and it will be based on the implementation and action priorities ultimately set by the NIRPC board. However, implementation will be most successful when true collaborative relationships are formed by those committed to addressing the region's needs.

THE IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY

While the CRP prescribes many implementation actions in the plan, the actions must be prioritized and programmed. The newly formed Implementation Committee, working with the regional community, will undertake the important task of helping to identify regional priorities, agencies, roles and funding. While the ultimate authority to approve and implement a program on behalf of NIRPC will rest with its board, it is through collaboration with other stakeholders serving on the committee that will make it work.

To keep momentum and the promise of the CRP vision moving forward, the creation of a five- and 10-year priority implementation agenda is necessary. The agenda will be framed within a well-defined funding program and detail the means by which project and priority initiatives will be completed. The agenda will be updated and modified as required to respond to conditions and opportunities as they arise, but it will be a prime measure for CRP progress through the years.

In the end, it is up to the regional community, not just NIRPC, to implement the CRP. However, NIRPC understands its role in regional and local consensus building, and a strong and focused Implementation Committee will help realize long-term success.





OUR FUTURE AWAITS

“Let’s commit ourselves today to the shared task that lies before us.”

~ Bishop Dale J. Melczek, Catholic Diocese of Gary

On a cold, snow-driven December day in 2008, more than 500 people, from all walks of life, gathered in Merrillville to begin the process of charting our future. Never before was there an effort to comprehensively plan for all three Indiana counties sharing the Lake Michigan shoreline. From this meeting, to numerous public gatherings, a course has been set to direct our planning, policies and investments well into the 21st century.

NIRPC’s 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan represents this course of action, which has been summarized in this document. We encourage you, the Northwest Indiana resident and stakeholder, to take an active role in positioning our region toward a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united future. Whether you have been a consistent participant in regional forums or are new to the process, your input is valuable for our dialogue on successful implementation to continue.

Please take the time to read through the full CRP at <http://www.nirpc.org/2040CRP>. Here you will be able to digest the entire scope of the CRP’s recommendations, list of best practices and detailed performance measures for each of the sections summarized in this document. You also will discover how you can play a vital role in creating our tomorrow... today.

**Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
June 2011**

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